

PICTURE THIS...

***An Inquiry into the Experiences, the Qualities and the Meanings of Arts Based Learning
in an Australian Creative Arts Therapy postgraduate education program***

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is that of the author alone. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part to qualify for any other academic award. The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement of the approved research program. There has been no editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the University, and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Geraldine E. Katz

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ABSTRACT

This study was comprised of an examination of arts based learning in the RMIT University Master of Creative Arts Therapy (MCAT) program 1996-2007 and a coinciding exploration of the process of arts based research. Formed as a qualitative, arts based educational research inquiry, it explored the experiences of former students and teachers with the aim of illuminating the qualities and meanings of arts based learning within this program. Concurrently, the study explored arts based research methods through the creation of an imaginative reconstruction of the research data. The study arose from the author's experiences as the coordinator of the MCAT program, and from the ostensible gap in the literature on learning and teaching the field of creative arts therapy in Australia. Most particularly, it sprang from the author's desire to gain a more in depth understanding of program graduates' description of their MCAT experiences as *life changing*.

This study posits an eclectic mix of methodology and method drawing on the works of selected educational research scholars, as well as those who write about the arts in education. A parallel research focus, under the umbrella of fictionalising research and storytelling, drew on the ideas of several authors writing within this genre and that of arts based research. Information for the study was gathered from several sources; interviews with program participants, program and course documents, extracts from my conference papers together with my journal notes recorded whilst in the role of program coordinator all contributed to the formation of a particular picture of arts based learning and teaching. The inquiry locates, epistemologically, within a phenomenological qualitative paradigm that acknowledges the contribution of personal knowledge and experience to the wider understanding of the subject under examination.

The research found an array of qualities and themes embedded within arts based learning experiences that gave meaning to the processes, and suggested explanations for the program being identified by its participants as a *life changing* experience. The study also extended the author's understanding and competence in creative, arts based research. The findings and conclusions of this study have the potential to advance the education of creative arts therapists in Australia, and to contribute knowledge to the broad education of therapists in various professions, both locally and internationally.

Key Terms: Arts based learning; creative arts therapy; fictionalising research; storytelling

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

This study forms an inquiry into experiences of arts based learning and teaching within an Australian postgraduate tertiary program in Creative Arts Therapy. Specifically, it examined educational experiences in the RMIT University Master of Creative Arts Therapy (MCAT) program in the years 1996-2007. The inquiry was a qualitative, arts based, educational research (ABER) study in which the literary art form of storytelling was its arts based component. It was, by definition and design, multi-layered.

1. Overview of the Study

The study was an investigation into the arts based learning and teaching experiences of MCAT participants¹ with a concurrent exploration into a process of fictionalising research using imaginative reconstructions as a means of portraying those learning and teaching experiences. The aim of this research was twofold: to examine experiences of arts based learning and to explore a creative research process through fictionalising data. More broadly, the research aims were to advance my understanding of the meanings and qualities of arts based learning in the RMIT MCAT program through an exploration of the experiences of program participants, and to undertake a creative arts based research process through crafting a fictional representation of those MCAT experiences, thus exploring the possibilities in such a representation.

1.1 The Research Questions

The main research questions that underpinned the inquiry were as follows:

- How was arts based learning and teaching experienced by participants of the MCAT program?
- What were the qualities and meanings of arts based learning in the MCAT program?
- How may the MCAT educational experiences be portrayed in a creative literary form and what is revealed in that portrayal?

¹ MCAT Participants are defined as students, teachers, and supervisors.

Secondary research questions underpinning the inquiry were:

- What is involved in the process of arts based research?
- How do the arts contribute to learning?

1.2 Rationale for undertaking this Study

Writing on the research of lived experience, van Manen notes that educational researchers tend to object to the possibility of understanding learning experiences and then making this understanding pedagogically relevant. Under his heading, Action Sensitive Knowledge Leads to Pedagogic Competence, he compares the pragmatic consequences of behavioural science research in education with phenomenological research, noting that the former leads to “instrumental knowledge principles, useful techniques and rules-for-acting” whereas the latter “gives us tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment and depthful understanding.”² These phrases from van Manen’s work, “tactful thoughtfulness,” “situational perceptiveness” and in particular, “depthful understanding,” resonated with my sense of what I hoped to uncover in the study, as well as the intellectual position in which I saw myself as both an educator and a therapist. And, although I did not choose a singularly phenomenological approach to the research, the study is certainly phenomenological in nature.

The following narrative highlights, in point form, my rationale for undertaking this study.

- There was a gap in the literature on educating creative arts therapists, in particular through an arts based learning approach. The MCAT program had created a ‘knowledge-field’ in creative arts therapy education that had the potential to partially fill that gap.
- The program was innovative and distinctive in its approach to learning and thus in its preparation of therapists for professional practice and community service. It was closed just about the time that it had begun to be recognised in academia and in healthcare. While it did exist, many of its graduates nominated their experience in it as ‘life-changing.’ I saw some importance in finding a means of documenting all of that.
- As an educator and as a therapist, I had become intrigued by the larger question: What is it about the arts that their inclusion seems to enliven and enrich educational experiences? I was interested to explicate the meanings and nuances of educational experiences with which I had been directly involved as a possible explanation to that larger question.

² Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 156.

- The impetus to investigate storytelling as research and to create stories that would portray student and teacher accounts of their arts based learning experiences and events was engendered, in no small part, by the expressed enthusiasm of MCAT graduates and teachers about their participation in the RMIT program. I wanted to find ways to articulate the meanings and nuances of their experiences, a study that would, as Coles puts it, “Do justice to the complexity of observable life in looking at what kind of work we are [were] doing and to what purpose, that is, what matters [mattered] and why.”³

Therefore, within this study, I was interested to, if possible, uncover the essence of what it was that the teachers, the students, and I were achieving within this educational program; how, as a community of teachers, students and arts therapy practitioners, we created, or more accurately, co-created, a learning environment that engendered both practical and philosophical knowledge. Furthermore, I wanted to create a thesis that might expand conventional ideas of educational research and learning, both in its process and its representation.

1.3 Factors that pointed to an Arts Based Research Approach

In my work as a psychotherapist and mental health nurse, I had begun to be intrigued by the sensory and imaginative aspects of my clients’ experiences, reflecting at times directly with them about how their experiences might look and sound, rather than simply on how they might be thought about, and how they might express them in representational ways. To wit, how experiences might be differently imagined and expressed. I had explored some of this different perspective in my MA thesis,⁴ which examined the ways that imaginative literature offers alternative understandings of women’s madness, and I saw my appointment as coordinator of the MCAT program as a serendipitous follow-on to that research. One facet that I brought to my coordination role, and to the program at large, was a well-anchored and informed belief about the power of storytelling and imaginative literature to enhance learning. I am a committed advocate of the concept that imaginative literature (prose, poetry and plays) and storytelling can act as powerful resources in the search to understand the world and our place in it, as well as for illustrating and illuminating many theories about human behaviour.

My involvement in the MCAT program nurtured these views along with my steady curiosity about, the place of the arts in learning and in therapy. In this role I was immersed in an evolving approach to learning that was both imaginative and sensory, with its focus of arts based learning

³ Robert Coles, *Doing Documentary Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14.

⁴ Geraldine Katz, *Literature and Psychotherapy: A Feminist Perspective* (MA Thesis, Hamline University, 1990, Unpublished).

as a reflection of arts based therapy practice. Prime among the MCAT learning experiences was an arts based minor research project that MCAT students undertook as their final component of study. It was my great pleasure and privilege to oversee all student progress through this phase of their studies as well as to supervise some students each year. Thus, when contemplating this research, and how to approach it, it seemed only logical that it would be arts based; in keeping with that approach, my preferred art form was literary.

1.4 The Location, Scope and Limitations of the Study

1.4.1 The study was located retrospectively, in the RMIT~MCAT program in that the preponderance of the research was done after the program was closed at the end of 2007. In that sense, the study was located in the accounts of MCAT participants gleaned through interviews and casual conversations, as well as in the program documents, course evaluations, and my journal notes and recollections from my role as coordinator of the program. Within the broad field of educational research, the study was located as an exploration that sought to portray and illuminate arts based learning experiences.

1.4.2 I note the importance of stating what the study did not do, as well as advising the reader of its apparent limitations. The study did not examine curriculum per se and, therefore, it did not address issues of curriculum theory or design. References to the curriculum were used as a backdrop to the study's illumination of arts based learning and teaching experiences. Similarly, the study was not a critique of teaching methods or strategies. It did not set out to generate an educational theory, or to prove any particular point about learning and teaching.

1.4.3 The study was located as an exploration of the educational experiences of participants in a specific postgraduate educational program. That framework was itself a limitation, though neither an adverse nor a difficult one. However, it must be noted that the scope of the study was also somewhat limited by the following aspects: the range of available MCAT participants, the retrospective nature of the study, and the lack of a body of literature on creative arts therapy education.

1.4.3a Many of the MCAT participants were unavailable to be interviewed about their experiences in the program. Those who did respond and were interviewed were enthusiastic proponents of the program even whilst at times critical of some aspects of their learning experiences. Conversely, a number of those who, as students, had been less positive about their MCAT experiences did not respond to my invitation to be interviewed. Therefore, I could only depend on course evaluation comments and my recall of their dissents in my attempt to give

voice to their viewpoints. This was a gap, a felt space as I created the story, and in my overall reflections of the study.

1.4.3b The retrospective nature of the study, the fact that it was conducted after the program closed, placed the data as memoir. This is not to say that program participant's memories were inaccurate, rather that I can see an ongoing action research project, undertaken whilst a program is alive and functioning, as presenting a more dynamic picture, offering findings that could be effectively applied, reviewed and reapplied.

1.4.3c The limited to non-existent literature on creative arts therapy education made any comparison of findings essentially impossible. Within the research process, I made allowance for the fact that I was both looking and not looking at educational approaches to specialist art therapy or music therapy programs per se, but rather at a multi modal creative arts therapy paradigm. This uniqueness was both a benefit and a bane; a benefit in that it gave wide scope for MCAT viewpoints as potentially setting precedents, a bane in the sense of there being no touchstones with which to compare what I saw as the excellence of the MCAT program.

1.5 Storytelling and Imaginative Reconstruction as Research

When I began this research inquiry, I knew that I wanted to portray MCAT student and teacher experiences through an imaginative reconstruction of those experiences and the learning events of which they were a part. I wanted to compose vignettes and anecdotes that might, as Willis suggests, "Capture, confront, enrich, and even arrest the reader."⁵ My discovery of a body of work on fictionalizing research was initially through Barone's text entitled touching eternity. I found it compelling for its resonance with my long-standing embrace of imaginative literature. Thus, for the significant element of storytelling within this study, I chose the approach of fictionalizing research as contrasted to the more commonly recognised approach of Narrative Inquiry. I did a close reading of the work of scholars, Clandinen and Connelly on narrative inquiry as qualitative research,⁶ and I could have selected this approach for the study with, presumably, equal results. Hence, it was simply a matter of choice based on what I as the researcher saw as most appropriate for my purposes.

⁵ Peter Willis, *Inviting Learning, An exhibition of risk and enrichment in adult education practice* (Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2002), 23.

⁶ Jean Clandinen and Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: experience and story in qualitative research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

1.6 Structure of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature which I have entitled “A Creative Engagement with the Literature.” As noted, I was unable to locate this study within a body of literature that relates specifically to arts based learning for an Australian creative arts therapy program, (or any other) and I am as certain as I can be that such a body does not exist. Hence, I have formed this chapter as a review of the work of a number of scholars who write on the broad topics that are relevant to this study. These include the Arts in Education and Arts based Learning. My review of some of the literature contained in these genres reveals aspects that relate to my inquiry and which may be interpreted as relating to, or reflecting, the MCAT arts based learning approach. I noted that the discussion may indeed answer the question, “What are the philosophical bases for the MCAT program’s approach to learning?” On the topic of Fictionalising Research, I found a substantial body of works that are located as a subset of the broad genre of Arts based research.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology and methods that have been used to frame and guide this study. These are Qualitative Arts Based approaches to education and research, and to Fictionalising data. The chapter includes a description of how the data was gathered and reviewed for the Study.

Chapter 4 provides the context for this study through an overview of the MCAT program. Shaped into three parts, the chapter is a descriptive biography of the program; how it looked at its beginning, how its approach to learning evolved to become arts focused, and how it looked at the time it was closed. The chapter reviews program structures, coordination, teaching staff, student cohorts that emerged, and the forces that mediated changes to its learning and teaching approaches. It refers to the MCAT educational philosophy and the developmental learning model and discusses its evolving curriculum. The chapter provides a brief discussion of the educational and therapeutic values that I brought to my position as program coordinator. Overall it sets the stage for the reader to approach the following chapter, The Arts Based Project.

Chapter 5 sets out the Arts based Project which takes the form of an imaginative reconstruction that foregrounds imagined conversations among MCAT graduates and teachers about their learning and teaching experiences in the program. The conversations are interspersed with

vignettes and anecdotes that illuminate MCAT learning events, together with short sections that contain my commentary and reflections on relevant learning constructs and precepts.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the study. The qualities and meanings of the arts based learning experiences are identified, as these have emerged from the Arts Based Project (Chapter 5). The discussion also returns to, and briefly addresses, each of the research questions. In elucidating qualities and themes, I was guided by Eisner's model of Educational Critique (as set out in Chapter 3) as well as by the work of van Manen. My analysis of the arts based research process of imaginative reconstruction refers to the works of Banks, Barone, and Clough on fictionalising research data. A narrative of my research process is included.

Chapter 7 presents my Conclusions and a discussion of implications for the practice of educating arts therapists and the potential for future research that is suggested by this study.

1.7 Key Terms as they are used in this Study

This section is set out to clarify some of the terminology that is used in the study. Terms that warrant such clarification are ones that are differently defined in different literary genres and academic disciplines. In general, I have used these terms as they are referred to in the fields of education and the arts therapies, and primarily as they pertain to learning for creative arts therapy and to arts therapy practice. Where it seems appropriate, I have referenced scholars to expand the discussion of each term.

1.7.1 Creativity and Creative Process

These terms are used throughout the study in reference to learning through the arts and to the arts therapies. They denote being and thinking imaginatively and with originality, and to activities that constitute the making of something. Jeanneret and Forrest observe that, "The term 'creativity' has no universally accepted definition although many writers have explored the concept." They note that researchers often seem more at ease in discussing processes of creativity and the requisite attributes for engaging in a creative process. They conclude their review with the useful proviso that, "Creativity means different things to different people and different perspectives reside in different disciplines."⁷

Bohm also posits the idea that creativity is impossible to define and says it is the province of all human beings, not just the gifted and talented. He links creativity with originality, extending the

⁷ Neryl Jeanneret and David Forrest, "Policy and Music Education: A 'New' Culture of Creativity" in *Music Education, Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives*, eds., C.C. Leung, R.L.C. Yip & T. Imada. (Hiroake: Hiroake University Press, 2008), Ch. 9.

link to the capacity to learn something new such that preconceptions are overturned even in spite of oneself. He points to learning in childhood as a way of understanding creativity, and writes,

It is well known that the child learns to walk, to talk, and to know his way around in the world just by *trying something and seeing what happens*, then modifying what he does (or thinks) in accordance what has actually happened. In this way he spends his first few years in a wonderfully creative way, discovering all sorts of things that are new to him.⁸

Bohm states that this type of learning cannot be overemphasized, at all stages of a lifetime. He notes “The importance of giving the action of learning itself top priority ahead of the specific content of what is to be learned.”⁹ These perspectives exemplify the “What if....” proposition that was a platform for the arts based learning in the MCAT program. Bohm’s ideas also relate to the arts based approach of this study.

Rodari states that, “Creativity is synonymous with “divergent thought,” that is, thinking that is capable of continually breaking the schemes of experience.”¹⁰ In what I take to be a supremely cogent exposition of creativity, learning, and creative process, he goes on to say that, “If we want to teach people how to *think* we must first teach them how to *invent*.”¹¹

1.7.2 Creative Arts Therapy

For the purposes of this inquiry, the field of creative arts therapy may be understood as the planned, integrative use of the arts to assist people in their efforts to contend with, and reconcile, their circumstances and needs, be they emotional, intellectual, physical or social. It is a therapeutic practice in which creative process is primary. Jones notes that the practice of Creative Arts Therapy, “Is grounded not in particular techniques or media, but in the capacity of the arts to respond to human suffering.”¹² Thus, the various art forms such as, visual art, music, drama, movement and storytelling, may be used in the following ways: to augment rehabilitation, as a means of maintaining health and fostering wellbeing, as palliation of disease or discomfort, or as contributor to learning processes in schools. Therefore, in both pedagogical and practical terms, ‘therapy’ is construed in its broadest, holistic sense as fostering growth, development and/or well being as these relate to the client’s lived world.

Creative arts therapists respond to the needs of clients of all ages, ethnicities and socio-economic communities, believing in the potential benefits that derive for anyone who engages in and with

⁸ David Bohm, *On Creativity* (London: Routledge, 1998), 3.

⁹ Ibid, 4.

¹⁰ Gianni Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories*, trans. Jack Zipes (New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1996), 114.

¹¹ Rodari, 121.

¹² Phil Jones, *The Arts Therapies: A Revolution in Health Care* (Hove: Brunner Routledge, 2005), 54.

the arts. Creative participation in art forms allows clients alternative pathways to tell (or not tell) their stories, and to do so factually or fantastically, or in some combination thereof. The arts provide containment for a client's concerns and issues, allowing client and therapist to work collaboratively. The creative arts therapist offers an arts focused environment with opportunities for creativity and play that are both challenging and nurturing, thus fostering a client's capacity for new and unexpected possibilities in managing real-life situations. Within a safe, therapeutic space, the arts therapist may act as a guide, a co-creator and/or a witness, whichever role seems to be needed by the client or client group in a particular situation.

The field of Creative Arts Therapy in Australia continues to develop its professional identity; one component is the requirement of postgraduate education for recognised practice. As described in this study, the education of prospective creative arts therapists involves learning to (help clients) construct therapeutic ends through both active and passive engagement with the arts, engagement that is informed by collaboration, improvisation and imagination. An elegant metaphor for this is Jazz, wherein musicians talk about their music as akin to seeing sounds and hearing images.

A note: Creative Arts Therapy is sometimes referred to as Expressive Arts Therapy, a title most often used in the North American arts therapy field.

1.7.3 Arts based Education

Most commonly referred to as education through the arts, I am using this term to describe the MCAT learning that was underpinned by the notion that art is knowledge and is a way of knowing. Barone and Eisner's argument regarding arts based research provides a platform for contemplating, if not defining, arts based education. They state:

Our essential argument is that the promotion of human understanding is made possible through the acquisition and utilization of different forms of representation. These forms are non redundant and they make possible different forms of understanding.¹³

I contend that the arts in therapy are also educative in that they offer pathways to understanding the world and to differently conceptualizing one's place in it. The concept of arts based education is central this inquiry; it is discussed at length in the review of the literature (Chapter 2). The arts based learning and teaching approaches most relevant to the MCAT program are discussed in The Context (Chapter 4) and set out as exemplars in The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5).

¹³ Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, *Arts based research* (London: Sage, 2012), 10.

1.7.4 Experience

For the purposes of this study I drew, in part, on the work of selected authors writing on the arts in education to explicate the idea of experience. Very broadly, the term ‘experience’ defines events that provide one with practical knowledge and skill. Eisner states that, “One of our most widely accepted beliefs is that experience is an automatic condition of living” and he says, of experience, that, “It is not only an event it is an achievement.”¹⁴ Furthermore, he maintains that, “The main agency for human experience is the senses, those biologically given information pickup systems through which we make contact with the world.”¹⁵ I was much drawn to the work of Winston who states that, “It is impossible to consider the nature of how we learn through beauty without attending to those theories of learning that put an emphasis on experience rather than on the accumulation of skills.”¹⁶ These observations are consonant with (arts based) experience as it is conceived of in this study, in MCAT education, and in creative arts therapy practice. The arts based learning experiences that are examined in this study may, in one sense, be understood as sensory events and achievements.

1.7.5 Imagination

Within this study that explores arts based learning, imagination is central to both the concepts and the practices of creative process and experiential learning. Greene states that, “Imagination is not only the power to form mental images....it is the also the power to mold experience into something new, to create fictive situations.”¹⁷ She goes on to say that, “At every stage, intellectual enquiry employs imagination.”¹⁸ I would add that imagination, reconstituted as empathy, which is the ability to put oneself in the place of another, is essential to effective therapeutic practice. Furthermore, Graham notes that, “Imagination is to be distinguished from mere fancy or whimsy. It is in fact a deliberative act of mind.”¹⁹

1.7.6 Play (and the importance of playing)

Ideas about what constitutes ‘play’ are, in my experience, almost infinite, with definitions arising from various disciplines and contexts. In the MCAT program, we referred to the work of Winnicott who denotes play as universal, and says that, “Playing facilitates growth and therefore

¹⁴ Elliot W. Eisner, *Reimagining Schools: Selected Works* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 112.

¹⁵ Ibid, 112.

¹⁶ Joe Winston, *Beauty and Education* (London: Routledge, 2010), 8.

¹⁷ Maxine Greene, *Variations on a Blue Guitar: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on AESTHETIC EDUCATION* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 30.

¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

¹⁹ Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of The Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2000), 53.

health.”²⁰ He later states that, “[Psycho]therapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist. If the therapist cannot play then he is not suitable for the work.”²¹ For the purposes of this study, I propose that play is any activity that opens imaginative reality to the client within a creative arts therapy construct; it may be achieved through an arts-focused bracketing off the day-to-day world and entering a world of play and playing facilitated by the creative arts therapist. For adults whose experiences have often been severely limited or deadened to the capacity for imaginative play, creative arts therapy offers a re-entry into the messiness and delights of creative play.

1.8 Premises that Underpinned the Study

Several premises underpinned this inquiry. The first was that the arts are important components of both learning and therapy. The second was that art, in its many forms, releases the imagination, fosters understanding, and honours diversity. A third premise was that stories allow both reader and writer - listener and teller - wide access to empathic knowledge. A fourth was that fictional representations of life events, as found in imaginative literature, are an important means of communicating ideas, and of generating alternative perspectives about the human condition. And, whilst the study had no plan to ‘prove the truth’ of any of these premises, the reader will find that they are referred to, and expanded on, within this study. It is perhaps worth mentioning at this juncture, a couple of the taken-for-granted premises that, as subtext, this study questions. These include premises about how learning is constructed and appropriated, and how therapists should be trained and educated.

1.9 Researcher Biases

I came to this study seeing it as an opportunity to explore and examine the educational experiences and processes with which I had been so closely involved for eleven and a half years. I brought to the study certain biases that pertain to what constitutes good learning, good therapy and good research. These biases derive from to a feminist therapy perspective and a problem-based learning orientation both of which premise an egalitarian approach to working with others, regardless of socially defined or prescribed roles. Furthermore, my bias toward arts based research that originated in my exploration of women’s madness and literature (MA Thesis) culminated in what I considered a privileged opportunity to supervise the arts based minor research projects of the MCAT students. Finally, as noted at different places within this research

²⁰ D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971), 41.

²¹ Ibid, 54.

text, is my bias toward the central importance of storytelling, in therapy, in learning and now, in research.

1.10 Interchangeable Terminology

Throughout the text the terms arts based and arts-based are used with the same meaning. In my writing, I have deleted the hyphen, electing to follow Barone and Eisner's example (from their 2012 text entitled *Arts based research*). However, some authors hyphenate the term and, where I have quoted them, I have honoured their usage of it.

1.11 Notes to the Reader

Within this study, my 'voice' appears in three guises. One voice is as the author-researcher with views and experiences as an educator, as a therapist, and as a reader of literature. Another of my voices is as one who is researched as a participant in the MCAT program, and yet another is as the storyteller and observing commentator. These individual voices are interwoven throughout the text, and may be 'heard' throughout the thesis. They are not necessarily identified under a subtitle.

The footnote style format throughout the thesis is from The Chicago Manual of Style,²² and uses the Shortened Citations, per Chapter 14 entitled "Documentation I: Notes and Bibliography."

Regarding the closure to the MCAT program, I would note that the University's decision to close the program was based on fiscal considerations, and in no way reflected negatively on the program curriculum or its approach to learning and teaching.

Summary

This introductory chapter has presented an overview of the study, its structure and the research questions. It has included a brief discussion of the background and context of the inquiry, along with some key definitions and a note to the reader. The next chapter provides a review of the relevant literature.

²² *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Chapter 2

An Engagement with the Literature

2. Introduction

I approached the composition of this chapter with an initial search on the topic of the literature review for a dissertation or thesis. I found that academic authors outline varying purposes of a literature review but generally agree that it is, in some form, essential to a research study.

Murray's discussion seems to encapsulate the various views; she writes that, "Not every thesis has a literature review, but every thesis writer has to write about the literature, showing how his or her work relates to that of others" and she continues, "There are several possibilities for the inclusion of a literature review; it may be an interpretation of published research, or it might be a research project in its own right."²³ Murray notes that, in general, the literature review provides background to the research being undertaken and, by implication, a justification for the study itself. She proposes that a literature review also serves as an indicator that the researcher has "a command, and detailed knowledge of the relevant theories to which the study attaches."²⁴ This discussion of the relevant literature subscribed to Murray's injunction; I, as the researcher, do have such command and detailed knowledge of the relevant theories.

In as much as there is not a specific body of literature within which to locate this study, it may seem to be at odds with Murray's premise of using the literature review 'to justify the study' except perhaps as a response to the absence thereof. However, Maxwell advises a somewhat more relaxed approach with his suggestion that, "The researcher needs only to be familiar with the relevant literature to properly situate a study."²⁵ As above and duly noted. Furthermore, advice from my supervisor accords with Oliver²⁶ who also posits a broad definition of a literature review, and suggests setting out the theoretical perspectives of selected writers, and discussing the relevance of these to the focus of the inquiry. This advice seemed the most cogent, hence I

²³ Rowena Murray, *How to Write a Proper Thesis* (New York: Sage, 2006), 3.

²⁴ Ibid, 4.

²⁵ J.A. Maxwell, "Literature reviews of, and for, educational research: A commentary on Boote and Beile's Scholars Before researchers." *Educational Researcher* 35, no.9, (2006): 28-31.

²⁶ Paul Oliver, *Succeeding With Your Literature Review: A Handbook for Students* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012).

have used it as the platform for this literature review, which has been retitled as an engagement with the relevant literature.

The lack of a specific body of literature that relates to arts based learning and teaching for an Australian creative arts therapy program, led me to refer to a number of scholars who write on the topic of the Arts in Education, along with others who write about Arts based Learning. It led me further to a creative and critical engagement with the relevant literature in order to make a framework for the study. Hence, my discussion of some of the literature contained in these genres may be read as a creative, analytical, and possibly pioneering synthesis of authors that frames the research questions, the theoretical tools and the appropriate methodology for this study. Throughout the discussion, I have interjected comments that highlight the relationship of the work of the cited authors to the MCAT arts based learning approach.

On the topic of Fictionalising Research, I discovered a substantial body of works that are located as a subset of the broad genre of Arts based research, also in themselves, relevant to the MCAT program.

This chapter is divided into sections under the following headings:

2.1 The Arts in Education: A discussion of selected works of scholars who have influenced my thinking about the Arts in Education.

2.2 Arts based Learning: A discussion of the work of some educationists who have explored Arts based Learning.

2.3 Fictionalising Educational Research: A discussion of writers whose work has, in my view, advanced academic acceptance of this research approach within the broad genre of Qualitative Research.

The mode of this Review is Narrative as defined by authors, Feak and Swales who write that, “Narrative [literature] reviews are typically somewhat broad in focus.”²⁷

2.1 The Arts in Education

The discussion in this section focuses on the ideas of Sir Herbert Read, Maxine Greene, Elliot Eisner and Peter Abbs, all of whom are prominent in illuminating and promoting the place of the arts in education. As well as recognising their professional devotion to this topic, the works of these authors were among those that informed my thinking for this study, and beyond that, for my practice as coordinator of the MCAT program.

²⁷ Christine B. Feak and John M. Swales, *Telling a Research Story: Writing a Literature Review* (Lansing MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 2.

2.1.1 *Herbert Read*

One of the earliest proponents arguing for the importance of the arts in education was Sir Herbert Read whose writing on this topic (from about 1920 to his death in 1968) is seen as groundbreaking. Within this brief discussion of his work I note, as an aside, that I was and continue to be, much taken with Read's definition of education; it remained posted above my desk throughout my tenure as MCAT program coordinator. Read notes that, "The purpose of education is to develop an individual's potentialities – his or her uniqueness." He then qualifies this statement with the observation that, "Uniqueness has no practical value in isolation. Education must be a process not only of individuation but also of *integration* which is the reconciliation of individual uniqueness with social unity."²⁸

Read states that perception and imagination are processes basic to both art and education, and they are incorporated into all modes of self expression, "Literary and poetic (verbal) no less than musical or aural, and form[s] an integral approach to reality which should be called *aesthetic education* – the education of those senses upon which consciousness and, ultimately, intelligence and judgement of the human individual are based."²⁹

I am especially drawn to Read's concern for the integration of education with the social good; that the arts are fundamental to the process as well as to each of those elements. This is a fundamental view expressed in the work of Maxine Greene, which is discussed in the following section.

With a view toward the essential nature of the arts in human experience, Read extends his definition of education as follows:

Education may be defined as the cultivation of modes of expression. It is teaching children and adults how to make sounds, images, movements, tools and utensils. All faculties of thought, logic, memory, sensibility, and intelligence are involved in such processes. And they are all processes which involve art, for art is nothing but the good making of sounds, images etc. The aim of education is therefore, the creation of artists, of people efficient in the various modes of expression.³⁰

These few, brief samples from Read's work reflect the art based learning approach in the MCAT program, for among its educational aims were the 'cultivation of modes of expression – the good making of images, sounds, etc.', as well as the development of the creative arts therapist as artist. Indeed, one might say these were a *raison d'être* of the arts based learning approach.

²⁸ Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber, 1958), 5.

²⁹ Ibid, 7.

³⁰ Ibid, 11.

2.1.2 Maxine Greene

To those with an interest in the arts in education, Maxine Greene needs no introduction. Her devotion to the subject and, by extension, to aesthetic education and to their role in social justice has won her the acclaim of educationists worldwide. My first encounter with Greene's work was through reading her text, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*. Written in 1995, I discovered it in 2003 when as teacher and program coordinator, I was casting about for the works of authors who might inform and guide the emerging arts based pedagogy of the MCAT program. I read Greene's text as if it was as a 'page-turning' novel; I could scarcely put it down, as her thoughts and ideas seemed so attuned to my professional needs then, and in the time since. Subsequent readings of her work have only confirmed my belief in the essential importance of her ideas.

One of the unifying themes in Greene's work is the importance she places on being 'wide awake' which she describes as being present to oneself and to the world around one. This might be understood as an embodied self-awareness, one that is active and ongoing. For it draws on all the senses – hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, tasting – and fosters an attitude of attention to life's requirements, both practical and aesthetic. I read this as a salient requirement for the active participation in arts based learning, and, not insignificantly, as something to be considered as a goal of creative arts therapy practice.

Referring to her interest and focus on the imagination, Greene says,

One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and others.³¹

As a teacher of prospective arts therapists, I found this notion of empathy and its source to be one that was both simple and profound. For creative arts therapy students, it offered a means of conceptualising the 'marriage' of the arts and therapy.

In a broad sense, Greene is concerned with aesthetic education which she defines as "An intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural participatory engagements with the arts."³² She distinguishes this from art education, which she describes as an exploration of various arts media. Greene's work indicates her strong advocacy for all persons, but especially students, to be given opportunities to be creative within a range of media.

³¹ Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 3.

³² Maxine Greene, *Variations on a Blue Guitar*, 6.

“Not just written and spoken language – but also paint, pastels, clay and stone; the melodies, dissonances and pulses of sounds that are music; and the body in motion in dance, making shapes, exerting effort, articulating visions and moving in space and time.”³³ These words and the following, could easily be read as a supporting argument for initiating the MCAT program, indeed as an endorsement of the field of creative arts therapy. Greene continues:

Pluralities of persons can be helped to go in search of their own images, their own vision of things, through carving, painting, dancing singing, or writing. They can be enabled to realize that one way of finding out what they are seeing, feeling and imagining is to transmute it into some kind of content and to give that content form. Doing so, they may experience all sorts of sensuous openings. They may unexpectedly perceive patterns and structures they never knew existed in the surrounding world. They may discover all sorts of new perspectives as the curtains of inattentiveness pull apart.³⁴

Greene thus argues for pedagogy that integrates art education and aesthetic education.

Such pedagogy was not one that directly informed the MCAT program, but it was my experience that aspects of both contributed to arts based pedagogy for learning creative arts therapy. As an educator of creative arts therapy students, I was drawn to Greene’s idea of the importance of ‘noticing what there is to be noticed’ as a feature of the ‘wide-awakeness’ that is gained through experience in and with the arts. Furthermore, by taking the resulting awareness into deeper realms of personal meaning, the MCAT students were able to visualise this idea as a process; it seemed to resonate both for themselves and as a goal of creative arts therapy. The arts based learning that contributed to the developing identities of MCAT students as artists and arts therapists was predicated on the sorts of concepts that Greene articulates.

2.1.3 Elliot Eisner

Eisner’s dedication to the importance of the arts in education is longstanding and unequivocal. He writes and speaks of it with both knowledge and passion, and his work on the subject is extensive. I see Eisner’s ideas about art and education as largely encapsulated in his 2002 John Dewey Lecture³⁵ and so I have used a close reading of this piece to explore some of his thoughts and ideas that are particularly relevant to this study.

³³ Greene. *Releasing the Imagination*, 136-37.

³⁴ Ibid, 137.

³⁵ Elliot W. Eisner, 'What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education?' *the encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/biblio/eisner_arts_and_the_practice_or_education.htm. Dewey Lecture, 2002.

Eisner remarks on the influence of art historian, Sir Herbert Read when he says,

He argued and I concur that the aim of education ought to be conceived of as the preparation of artists. By the term artist neither he nor I mean necessarily painters and dancers, poets and playwrights. We mean individuals who have developed the ideas, the sensibilities, the skills, and the imagination to create work that is well proportioned, skilfully executed, and imaginative, regardless of the domain in which an individual works. The highest accolade we can confer upon someone is to say that he or she is an artist whether as a carpenter or a surgeon, a cook or an engineer, a physicist or a teacher. The fine arts have no monopoly on the artistic.³⁶

As noted, one of the aims of educating MCAT students as creative arts therapists was to encourage their creative, artistic sensibilities, indeed, to evoke a sense of themselves as artists, both in their work with clients and in their own pursuit of creative endeavours in their studio spaces. In one sense, it was the preparation of an artist identity for working in a therapeutic context. There is about Eisner's approach to the subject a wonderful, in my opinion, ambiguity, and a lack of absolute certainty that affords the reader opportunities for broad and experimental thinking. This was an educational value that was foremost in the MCAT program.

Within his lecture, Eisner lays out a set of 'distinctive, artistically rooted qualitative forms of intelligence and of thinking.'³⁷ He discusses each of them under the abbreviated title, "Artistically rooted forms of intelligence" and talks about the way it might play out in schools. The first of these is 'Experiencing qualitative relationships and making judgements'³⁸ and within this category, he notes that as a prime instructional benefit, "The arts teach students to act and to judge in the absence of rule, to rely on feeling, to pay attention to nuance, to act and appraise the consequences of one's choices and to revise and then to make other choices."³⁹ It is important to get these relationships right, and how judging them, Eisner suggests, is to have what Nelson Goodman calls *rightness of fit* one that, "Depends upon somatic knowledge, the sense of closure that the good gestalt engenders in embodied experience."⁴⁰

I read this as the kind of experience in which any person may describe things as simply feeling right, affirmed perhaps in the colloquial expression, "Right on!" Eisner reminds us that, "Work in the arts cultivates these modes of thinking and feeling. Such forms of thought integrate feeling

³⁶ Ibid, 6.

³⁷ Ibid, 3.

³⁸ Ibid, 7.

³⁹ Ibid, 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 7.

and thinking in ways that make them inseparable. And so, as we learn in and through the arts we become more qualitatively intelligent.”⁴¹

Eisner’s second proposition he calls ‘Flexible purposing’ which embraces exploration and discovery, and affirms the importance of “opening oneself to the uncertain.” Eisner argues for this as a value to be cherished, along with the promotion of self-initiated learning, the pursuit of alternative possibilities, and the anticipation of intrinsic satisfactions secured through the use of the mind. This idea of opening oneself to the uncertain ties closely to that proposed by psychotherapist, Spinelli who writes on the idea of *un-knowing* in the therapeutic relationship. Spinelli’s work was used extensively as part of MCAT student learning, and his concepts were readily embraced by students as both interesting and approachable.

In coining the term *un-knowing*, Spinelli notes how taking this position, “Expresses the attempt to treat the seemingly familiar or that of which we are either aware or informed, as novel, unfixed in meaning, and accessible to previously unexamined possibilities.”⁴² This idea bespeaks an easy accommodation with arts based learning and with arts therapies.

Eisner observes that the arts teach that not everything knowable can be articulated in propositional form; that the limits of our cognition are not defined by the limits of our language. He refers to the idea of *tacit knowledge*, which is about us knowing more than we can tell. This is an idea espoused by Michael Polanyi writing on phenomenology and by Clark Moustakis who writes on heuristic research.

I view the concept of tacit knowing as an essential understanding for work as a therapist; to realise that when people are unable to articulate how they know something, it is not because they are withholding information or resisting the telling of it. Hence, the idea was an important conceptual component that was flagged to MCAT students for their contemplation in their overall consideration of therapeutic processes as well as in their study of research. It was also made the focus of interactive learning discussions in the exploration of therapeutic relationships. Eisner suggests that many of us who teach seek to employ a form of educational practice that, at its best, helps the student in, “A process of learning how to become the architect of our own education” and he adds that, “It is a process that does not terminate until we do.”⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid, 8.

⁴² Ernesto Spinelli, *Tales of Un-Knowing: therapeutic encounters from an existential perspective* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1997), 4.

⁴³ Eisner, The Dewey Lecture, 9.

A further category within Eisner's grouping of artistically rooted forms of intelligence is the importance of looking at, and understanding the medium, "The relationship between thinking and the material with which we and our students work." He notes that, "The artist's task is to exploit the possibilities of the medium" and that, "Each material imposes its own distinctive demands and to use it well we have to learn to think within it."⁴⁴ Outlining the parallels to teaching in subjects such as social studies, the sciences or language arts, Eisner asks us to consider the cognitive demands that different media make upon those who use them, adding that, "Carving a sculpture out of a piece of wood is clearly a different cognitive task than building a sculpture out of plasticine clay." Hence we can see that in matters of representation, "New possibilities can stimulate our imaginative capacities and can generate form of experience that would otherwise not exist." He continues, "Each new material offers us new affordances and constraints and in the process develops the ways in which we think."⁴⁵

I see Eisner's description as very much in keeping with Greene's ideas highlighted earlier in this discussion, and the ideas of both relate to the arts based learning in the MCAT program. Among the primary learning aims was having students think differently, or anew, about their concepts of therapy, of art and of creative arts therapy.

A particularly important aspect of Eisner's lecture, in terms of its relevance to this inquiry is his discussion of aesthetics in his category entitled, "The aesthetic satisfactions that the work itself makes possible." Here he posits the idea that the arts motivate engagement because of the aesthetic satisfaction that they give to the creator of a work. He states,

A part of these satisfactions is related to the challenge that the work presents; materials resist the maker, they have to be crafted and this requires an intense focus on the modulation of forms as they emerge in a material being processed. This focus is often so intense that all sense of time is lost. The work and the worker become one. At times it is the tactile quality of the medium that matters, its feel, the giving and resisting quality of the clay. At other times it is the changing relationships among fields of color. The arts, in a sense, are supermarkets for the senses. But the arts are far more than supermarkets for sensory gourmets. In the arts there is an idea which the work embodies.⁴⁶

Thus, Eisner notes the special form of experience that engagement with the arts can provide, and is emphatic in his view that when we are touched by an art form, "There is a sense of vitality and

⁴⁴ Ibid, 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 14.

the surge of emotion.”⁴⁷ As noted elsewhere in this exegesis, this idea is in keeping with that of Arnheim, who proposes a similar energy obtained through viewing art. Eisner proposes that this kind of experience can be replicated when, as teachers, we explore with our students the unending array of educational challenges. To wit, the experience of the arts can serve as a model for education.

I was interested to read the following, as all the features in Eisner’s proposal were integral to student learning the MCAT program. I also saw how the quote could point to this inquiry by substituting the term ‘PhD’ for the phrases, ‘a culture of schooling’ and ‘an educational culture.’ Eisner proposes,

A culture of schooling in which more importance is placed on exploration than on discovery, more value is assigned to surprise than to control, more attention is devoted to what is distinctive than to what is standard, more interest is related to what is metaphorical than to what is literal. It is an educational culture that has a greater focus on becoming than on being, places more value on the imaginative than on the factual, assigns greater priority to valuing than to measuring, and regards the quality of the journey as more educationally significant than the speed at which the destination is reached.⁴⁸

Referring to Dewey who declared that, “Imagination is the chief instrument of the good”⁴⁹ Eisner closes his lecture with the caution that, “Imagination is no mere ornament, nor is art. Together they can liberate us from our indurated habits.”⁵⁰

Clearly this is an idea that is synchronistic with those of Maxine Greene, and a host of others writing into this topic, it was one that informed the arts based learning undertaken by students in the MCAT program. It stands as an affirmation of the arts therapies.

2.1.4 Peter Abbs

Concerning the relationship of the arts to curriculum, and referring specifically to the six major disciplines: art, drama, music, dance, film and literature, Abbs comments on the arts: “As symbolic re-presentations of experience they are, therefore, inherently concerned with meaning and knowing” and that, “This form of knowing is non-propositional or rather sensuous, imaginal and aesthetic in nature.”⁵¹ Abbs states that, “Art itself is seen as possessing a liberating energy”⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid, 15

⁴⁸ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1934/1990), 16.

⁵⁰ Eisner, The Dewey Lecture, 16.

⁵¹ Peter Abbs, *Living Powers: the Arts in Education* (London: The Falmer Press, 1987), 208-09.

⁵² Ibid, 9.

an idea that echoes both Eisner (see above) and art psychologist, Rudolf Arnheim who suggested that in our experience of art, “What strikes the eye provides a life-giving energy.”⁵³ Arguing for aesthetic education, Abbs says, “The value of art lies in its aesthetic power, in its vitality, in its relationship to the alert senses and the open imagination.”⁵⁴

These observations are in tune with Greene’s ideas, also noted above, on the arts as providing a heightened alertness to the things around one, to evoking a sense of wide-awakeness, and a releasing of the imagination from the constraints of everyday life. Abbs writes that, “*Art has never been primarily concerned with the literal documentation of facts* - its first and distinguishing task has always been to give visual form to sensuous and imaginative impressions and feelings – to *perceptual experience*.”⁵⁵ He disputes the practice of referring to a work of art as making ‘a statement’ acknowledging Suzanne Langer as he notes that art is not propositional by nature, but is *presentational*.” Abbs further argues against the notion of the work of the art-maker as “a ‘form of visual research’ ‘an assembling of data’ or a ‘method of problem-solving.’”⁵⁶ (all italics those of the author)

Abbs’ criticism of the idea of art as simply self-expression reminded me of British art therapy pioneer E.M. Lyddiatt, who, in referring to the work of patients, warned practicing art therapists to, “Leave it flat. This is not Art!”⁵⁷ It also relates to Arnheim’s hesitations about conceiving of the arts as therapeutic. I see these ideas as underscoring the importance of differentiating between Art and the many forms of creative expression that constitute the arts therapies.

Furthermore, I read these arguments as a caution to also make clear that both the process and the product of arts based learning is also not art.

Abbs points to the “progressivist fallacy of split between reason and feeling, between knowledge and expression between science and art” and declares that, “Through art we know the nature of our experience...Art like science though in a different field is a mode of comprehension, a mode of knowing, a mode of intellection.”⁵⁸ His words are akin to those of Herbert Read who comments that, “Art is the representation, science the explanation, of the same reality.”⁵⁹

⁵³ Rudolph Arnheim, *To the Rescue of Art: Twenty-Six Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 31.

⁵⁴ Abbs, 23.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 26

⁵⁷ E.M. Lyddiatt, *Spontaneous Painting and Modelling: A Practical Approach in Therapy* (London: Constable, 1971), 10.

⁵⁸ Abbs, 45, 46, 53, 55.

⁵⁹ Read, 11.

Abbs goes on to reflect on aesthetics, which he defines as “A distinct category of understanding – a sensuous knowing essential for the life and development of consciousness.” Abbs declares that, “All aesthetic activity as it is developed through the manifold forms of art is simultaneously perceptive, affective, and cognitive: it can offer an education therefore of the highest order, not thought the analytical intellect but thorough engaged sensibility.”⁶⁰ These ideas are congruent with those of art psychologist, Rudolph Arnheim who refers to a cognitive approach which he says is, “Based on an aesthetic philosophy according to which art is one of the principle means by which the human mind orients itself in the environment of its life space.” And that, “The true function of art [is] namely that of helping us to understand the things we see by interpreting their structure. In that sense, all representation is interpretation.”⁶¹

Abbs makes some interesting and cogent observations regarding the art medium, ideas that are congruent with those of Eisner, as noted earlier. He says,

The medium is not a neutral space through which the creative act passes; it is rather the tangible material which make the act possible, and as tangible material it has its own character inviting certain movements of the art-maker, resisting or confounding others. The material also carries with it a history, a repertoire of previous uses, of working conventions, of established connections and meanings, both covert and hidden. In engaging with the material, the art-maker thus engages both consciously and unconsciously with tradition, with the forms already used and the modes and the techniques those forms have employed and passed on.⁶²

In my reflections on the education of students for creative arts therapy, these ideas proposed by both Abbs and Arnheim and as noted in Eisner’s discussion above, were important as they underscored the arts based learning within the MCAT program, and contributed to its scope. Students were encouraged to reflect on their experience with materials as a way of understanding their own responses and for achieving an empathetic understanding of a client’s response to what they as therapist might be offering. They were also directed, at different points in their learning, to reflect on their individual conception of the meaning of art, and their interpretation of it in their study of creative arts therapy.

Abbs furthers his ideas about materials with a reference to Stravinsky who, he says, “Compares the activity of the composer to that of an animal grubbing about, using his senses and his body to instinctively locate what he needs”⁶³ and who, Abbs says, is “emphatic about the absolute value

⁶⁰ Abbs, 56

⁶¹ Arnheim, *To the Rescue of Art*, 181.

⁶² Abbs, 57.

⁶³ Igor Stravinsky quoted in Abbs, 57.

of the exploratory and cumulative action.”⁶⁴ Again, this is an important insight for arts based learning as well as for creative arts therapy practice, from the dual perspectives of teacher and student, and therapist with client. It underscores a sense that I have about some of the parallels between learning and therapy. This is also a significant proposition regarding arts based learning for its idea of experimentation. Abbs’ thoughts on presentation and performance are also relevant to the practices of both arts based learning and arts therapy.

Abbs notes that, “In practical terms, the work needs to be shown to a responsive audience. It requires presentation in a specific context which draws out its essential aesthetic import – performance with all due ceremony, thus turning away from static ‘art objects’ to a further aesthetic interaction.”⁶⁵ This speaks to the “therapist-as-witness” concept, which is a significant element of arts therapy practice, and for which the MCAT students were continuously reminded.

Abbs uses terms like ‘creative indwelling’ and ‘expressive projection’ which closely parallel the making process.” He goes on: “In jazz and in certain forms of drama, dance and mime, the performing act is itself the primary action of creation with no fixed form prior to its expression. In such cases the art-making and the art-performing exist simultaneously in the achieved moments of continuous improvisation.”⁶⁶ He notes that,

In aesthetic education, the students move constantly from one position to the other, now making, now responding, now performing, now evaluating.” And he does not withhold his condemnation: “Under the virtual tyranny of the discursive and ideological mode, the performing element in the teaching of literature has been neglected, particularly in poetry.”⁶⁷

This author’s ideas on improvisation and performance, together with his overall concept of aesthetic education reflect what was standard practice in the MCAT program’s arts based teaching and arts based learning. His concepts apply as well, to both the theoretical constructs and to the practices of arts therapy.

Regarding the place of the arts in education, Abbs observes that,

What needs to be nurtured is trust in the authority of the aesthetic form: trust in the power of the story, the narrative, the non-discursive symbol; trust in the organs of the imagination and sensibility through which they possess their power of meaning. We need,

⁶⁴ Abbs, 58.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 59.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 59.

in brief, to cultivate the aesthetic response before works of art; not the political or historical or conceptual.⁶⁸

This evokes the rather ubiquitous arts therapy practice espoused in much of the literature as, *Trust the process*. It is a significant aspect of arts therapy practice that has its practical origins in arts based learning.

2.2 Arts based Learning for the Arts Therapies

The results of my search for a body of literature with a focus on, or related to, arts based learning in a tertiary program for creative arts therapy was, as noted, essentially fruitless. I found only one source, a text by art therapist, Bruce Moon⁶⁹ on the specific topic of teaching and learning in tertiary Art Therapy programs, and no sources on the specific topic of arts based learning for postgraduate Creative Arts Therapy students. This deficit points to my assertion, as noted in both this chapter and The Introduction (Chapter 1) that this study appears to fill a gap in the extant literature.

2.2.1 Arts based Learning in Education

My search into the literature on the arts in education as arts based learning (and teaching) has found that it tends to be focused on experiences and examples in schools, in community organisations, or in teacher education that is for students who are specialising in teaching the arts to primary or secondary school children. I should add that my reading of this body of literature on arts based learning and teaching is, that by setting out conceptual notions together with examples, it is arguing for recognition of the importance of integrating the arts into general school curricula.

This is borne out by examples, such as that of author/editors Sinclair, Jeanneret and O'Toole⁷⁰ who gathered a significant body of works into a text that examines the principles and practices of arts based teaching experiences. The text foregrounds the places of the arts in schools, and as these apply to educating prospective teachers. They discuss the ways in which engagement with the arts can expand students' capacity for learning in general. In Chapter 11 of this text, entitled *Integrating the Arts: A Warm Bed for Student Learning*, author Chris Sinclair looks at the meaning of the educational term 'integrated arts' and notes the British and Australian approach as that of "Integrating the arts, not only into other areas of the curriculum but also across a

⁶⁸ Ibid, 60.

⁶⁹ Bruce Moon, *Essentials of art therapy education and practice* 2nd Edition (Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas, 2003).

⁷⁰ Christine Sinclair, Neryl Jeanneret, and John O'Toole, eds., *Education in the arts: teaching and learning in the contemporary curriculum*. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009).

number of arts disciplines” and further that, “In the UK the practice of integrating the arts in schools with the wider community has become more prevalent.”⁷¹ Sinclair refers to Peter Abbs’ four phase model of *making, presenting responding and evaluating* as a way of understanding how children engage with arts practices in schools. Sinclair extends this framework so that *making* is seen as a process of exploring and creating, and *responding* as a process of reflecting and evaluating.⁷²

These are the sorts of observations and propositions that are congruent with the arts based learning approach that was offered in the MCAT program, especially the Abbs model and Sinclair’s extension of it. They articulate and encapsulate the MCAT framework for arts based learning. As noted earlier, the element of presenting arts-focused representations of learning to and among colleagues and fellow students was a significant piece of the arts based learning model, whilst also reflecting an important element of creative arts therapy practice.

Concerning education processes, Sinclair reflects on what artists do all the time – “forming alternative solutions to a problem, being persistent, adjusting something after you’ve made a choice, taking responsibility for a decision and looking at options”⁷³ as so essential to all learning. Quoting Arnold Aprill of the CAPE Project she notes that, “Making art requires students to develop deep understanding in order to represent their ideas to others through the art.”⁷⁴ Sinclair defines creativity as an ‘imaginative activity’ that spawns creative insights which occur “When existing ideas are combined or reinterpreted in unexpected ways or when they are applied in areas with which they are not normally associated.”⁷⁵

Sinclair’s definition could be legitimately applied to arts based learning activities and processes within the MCAT program. An additional view which I happened upon in my literature search and which seemed in tune with Sinclair’s, was that of New Zealand music educator, John Drummond who suggests, “A shift from the idea of education as a rationalist pursuit of mastery toward the idea of education as the communal exploration of mystery.”⁷⁶ I found this to be a poetic yet very grounded idea and one that is in keeping with my own view of the best aims of education. It also conjured an image of how we approached all learning, and especially the arts based learning paradigms in the MCAT program.

⁷¹ Sinclair, Ibid, 196.

⁷² Ibid, 197.

⁷³ Ibid, 199.

⁷⁴ Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE), 220 So Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL.

⁷⁵ Sinclair, 200.

⁷⁶ John Drummond, “Music and the Arts: A Special Kind of Knowledge” Chapter 8 in E. Grierson and J. Mansfield, eds., *The Arts in Education* (Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press, 2003), 58.

In summary, I would note here that all the ideas that have been discussed thus far articulate the ideas and concepts that informed student learning experiences; they succinctly attach to the educational aims and to the practical application of those aims, as well as, ultimately to professional creative arts therapy practices. It may be said that the discussion thus far would speak to the question, “What are the philosophical bases of the MCAT program and its arts based approach to learning?”

2.3 Fictionalising Educational Research

By way of explaining my reasons for choosing to fictionalise the data in this study, I begin this section with Clough’s question and his partial answer to which I add a piece of my own. Clough asks, “Why is the story approach useful in education and educational research – the fictionalization of educational experiences?” and gives as his partial answer as, “Fictional stories can make public those experiences and perceptions that other methodological approaches and research techniques are unable to reveal.”⁷⁷

To Clough’s answer I would add my own which is, that imaginative literature has a unique capacity to explicate the slings and arrows of human experience, and does so whilst allowing the individual reader to arrive at his or her personal understandings, to figure things out accordingly. Imaginative literature does not instruct. I refer here, briefly, to the literary stories that were used for learning and teaching in the MCAT program, stories that are, at their core, about what author Raymond Carver called “fellow feeling.” It is an expansive term that describes the sense that we are all in this life together, all trying to make sense of events that can seem haphazard, arbitrary, and at times, absurd and meaningless. This echoes the views of several of the authors cited in this study.

My research has determined that the literature on fictionalising research is more extensive than what I had originally surmised, or indeed was able to locate, when I began this study. Over the past two decades, the evolving and expanding field of arts based research has spawned a genre of literature concerned with expressive methods of research and unique and interesting forms of representation of research processes and data. Fictionalising data is one such form, and several authors and researchers have made the case for fiction as research and research as fiction. Hence, whilst this is still a somewhat novel research approach, it is one for which a notable body of literature now exists and continues to grow. The works of prominent scholars attest to a

⁷⁷ Peter Clough, *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research* (Buckingham UK: Open University Press, 2002), 8-9.

widening academic and professional acceptance of this approach within the burgeoning purview of qualitative and arts based research.

This section of the literature review provides a brief discussion of the relevant literature on fictionalising research within the genre of Arts Based Research. For example, in their recently published text, Barone and Eisner⁷⁸ devote a chapter to the question of whether or not arts based research can be fictive. In a similar vein, author-editors, Knowles and Cole⁷⁹ devote a section under the title, “Literary Forms as a Genre.” The ensuing discussion is of selected works of academic authors, Tom Barone, Peter Clough, and Anna and Steven Banks. These authors discuss the idea of storied research and of experience as story, denoting, in one way or another, the fictional story as a way of knowledge, of thinking about, and explicating, experience. As the following discussion endeavours to illustrate, their work would seem to endorse a significant epistemological premise underpinning this study; that fictional representations of life events are an important means of communicating ideas about education and educational experience. This section also includes a few abstracts of research projects that are examples of fictionalised research.

2.3.1 Tom Barone

Barone was among the first of a list of authors whose work affirmed one of the methodological aims of this research project, which is to fictionalise the research data. I was drawn to Barone’s argument for, “An epistemology of ambiguity, that seeks out and celebrates meanings that are partial, tentative, incomplete, sometimes even contradictory, and originating from multiple vantage points, all of which are appropriate to an educational inquiry project whose role is the *enhancement of meaning* rather than a reduction of uncertainty.”⁸⁰ The ideas that such an epistemology reveals seemed to not only articulate some of my underlying aims for this aspect of the study, but to provide yet another picture of this inquiry’s “mosaic” that has been constructed with pieces that include Eisner’s notion of uncertainty and Spinelli’s concept of un-knowing. Furthermore, they seemed to illuminate what I tacitly knew about arts based learning, that it is, somehow, transformative. The following discussion highlights those elements of Barone’s text that are relevant to this inquiry; within this discussion I both quote and paraphrase the author.

⁷⁸ Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, *Arts based research* (London: Sage, 2012).

⁷⁹ Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole, eds., *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. (London: Sage Publications, 2008).

⁸⁰ Tom Barone, *touching eternity the enduring outcomes of teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 152-53.

Paraphrasing Barone, one of the goals of my research text was to explore both the concepts and practices of arts based learning from the perspective of how it was offered to, and experienced by, students of creative arts therapy. My text also sought to convey the sense of a dynamic learning experience that seemed most evident within an arts based framework. Barone draws attention to the traditions of educational research that, like social scientific research and evaluation, seeks literal and certain truths and, in contrast, notes his own alignment with the postmodernists whose views dispute the (alleged) “certainty of objectivity and regulative ideals, in favour of studies of phenomena which are more subjective and humble enterprises.”⁸¹

As noted, Barone’s epistemology is an idea that holds strong resonance for me as not only does it inform my approach to the construction of educational stories, it encapsulates the philosophy and pedagogy of the MCAT program wherein students were continually encouraged, and often directed, to contemplate the questions raised by their learning experiences, rather than to simply seek theoretical answers. I endeavoured to replicate that element of ambiguity within this inquiry. And, whilst Barone notes a contemporary and increasing practice of the blurring of boundaries between the social sciences and humanities, my text has extended that blurring and locates within a frame that may be defined as ‘art as research and research as art.’ Insofar as a frame is fully possible, it may be that this research project sits within a (metaphorical) framed landscape that encompasses both education and literary arts.

In arguing the importance of including imaginative literature within the purview of educational research, Barone refers to the work of Jerome Bruner who makes a distinction between logico-scientific and narrative forms of human cognition and the kinds of texts that speak to each form. Bruner notes that each kind of text is constructed for its intended purpose: the former to reduce uncertainty “by approaching, if never quite attaining, objective truth” and the latter to engage on a level of familiarity as found in the telling of a good story.⁸² Barone posits that, “Narrative texts (especially fictional ones) are designed to do what good art does so well. And what is that?”⁸³ Replying to his own question, he invokes the words of the novelist James Baldwin who observed, “Art’s greatest achievement is ‘the laying bare of questions which have been hidden by the answers’.”⁸⁴

As I have noted previously, this argument about questions versus answers and what might be learned from imaginative literature as contrasted to what is contained in theoretical texts was one

⁸¹ Ibid, 152.

⁸² Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 15.

⁸³ Barone, *touching eternity*, 154.

⁸⁴ James Baldwin, quoted in Barone, 154.

that was raised often and purposefully in my teaching with MCAT students. In that context, I would refer them to the work of Robert Coles who writes eloquently and forcefully about the power of literature to expand our understandings as therapists, about the human condition. Describing his use of imaginative literature in both his teaching and his work as a psychiatrist, Coles notes that,

I have gradually realized that my teaching (of literature) has helped that work alone – by reminding me how complex, ironic, ambiguous and fateful this life can be, and that the conceptual categories I learned in psychiatry, in psychoanalysis, in social sciences seminars are not the only means by which one might view the world.⁸⁵

References to Coles would invariably underpin my recommendation to students that they read and contemplate meanings in the literary stories of authors such as Raymond Carver⁸⁶ and Tillie Olsen.⁸⁷ Furthermore, that Coles' own account of his struggle to learn how to become a practicing psychiatrist and how, within that process, he was influenced by his two supervisors, but especially by the one who eschewed theories of psychiatric diagnosis in favour of listening closely and carefully to his clients' stories. The works of Carver and Olsen are, in my view, exemplars of literary narratives that illustrate life's complexities, ironies and ambiguities such as Coles points to. For, what I wanted to impart to fledgling arts therapists was that the lives of clients and patients could be messy, unpredictable, at times chaotic and often expressed in contradictory and ambiguous terms. It is the arts, with literature at the forefront, that engender empathetic knowledge and remind us that everyday life defies the ordered neatness of textbook theories.

At this juncture of my writing, it occurred to me that Barone's argument for the importance of narrative as a feature of educational research is largely synonymous with Coles' reflections on the significance of stories in the learning and practice of therapy and medicine. I might add that whilst my serendipitous encounters with the works of both authors has informed my thinking about, and practice of, teaching and therapy over the past two decades, I had overlooked the similarities in their approach to learning.

Barone observes that as many postmodernists began their careers in the social sciences rather than in the arts, they often misunderstand arts based research with its various permutations and

⁸⁵ Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), xvii.

⁸⁶ Raymond Carver, *Cathedral* (London: The Harvill Press, 1983).

⁸⁷ Tillie Olsen, *Tell Me A Riddle* (London: Virago, 1980).

unconventional approaches, seeing it as idiosyncratic kinds of social science “rather than experimental or revolutionary forms of art (literary or otherwise).”⁸⁸ He goes on to say that,

An inability to imagine research as art or literature as research, may also indicate a lingering sense of art as intuitive, rather than empirical, ‘subjective’ rather than as Ricoeur would insist, very much of the world.⁸⁹

I reflected on Barone’s comment on the inability to imagine the conjunction of art and research with the following response. My perusal of the literature on the broad genre of qualitative research has led me to think that it may be a view with diminishing currency both in the field of education and more broadly in the humanities and social sciences. I am encouraged by reading examples of arts based research projects in academic and scholarly journals [see Kilbourne (1998), Duke & Beck, (1999) and Gosse (2005) in *Educational Researcher*; Freitas (2003) in *The International Journal of Education and the Arts*; Diversi (1998) in *Qualitative Inquiry*] And, I note the apparent increase in the numbers of texts directed toward arts based approaches to research that I have been able to access through library catalogues including, for example, *Complementary methods for research in education* edited in 1997 by Richard M. Jaeger; *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* edited in 2003 by J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole; *Arts-based research in education: foundations for practice* edited in 2008 by Melissa Cahnmann-Taylor, M. and Richard Siegesmund; *Performance Ethnography: critical pedagogy and the politics of culture* by Norman K. Denzin in 2003; *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Practice* by Patricia Leavey in 2009; *Arts based research* by Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner in 2012.

As part of this study, I was interested in Barone’s concept of ‘critical utility’ as something that concerns itself “less with narrow truthfulness of statements and observations than with the values that support them. A text is critically useful in so far as it causes readers to question certain values (including educational values) previously considered beyond questioning.”⁹⁰

Barone’s idea highlights an implied aim of this inquiry, which is to raise questions about how therapists are educated and trained using the narrow constructs of strategies and skills. I was seeking something similar to Barone, who admits that his own text subscribes to the heuristic aims of stimulating reflection and discussion about educational inquiry, as well as a wish to satisfy his own curiosity. Barone is clear that he is seeking, among other things, “To reduce

⁸⁸ Barone, *touching eternity*, 154-55.

⁸⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation*, trans. J.B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) quoted in Barone, 154.

⁹⁰ Barone, *touching eternity*, 176-77.

commonsensical certainty about what it means to be educated.”⁹¹ My response to that statement is to mentally take it on as something of a mantra.

In summary, I found myself very much attuned to the ideas in Barone’s text, and note the questions it raised for me in terms of my own creative approach to this research. Many of his comments forced me to interrogate my inquiry; to ask myself whether, like his ‘Swain Project’, it exhibits the design elements most crucial in a narrative for achieving the heuristic aim of a work of art – that is the element of textual ambiguity? I certainly hope it has achieved that element as, what I endeavoured to accomplish was to pose it in such a way as to evoke considered thoughts and questions about standard and traditional approaches to learning for both the reader, and for me, the researcher. My reflections on Barone’s concept of ‘critical utility’ also led me to see a certain alignment with what I aimed for in the MCAT Program; that students would become concerned less with the narrow confines of theories of therapy than with the values that have to do with approaching a client or patient and the values held by that person that frame the context of his or her life. And, to do so (as both learners and as practitioners) through the arts.

2.3.2 Peter Clough

Educator Peter Clough is another whose work has been particularly helpful in locating my creative approach to this research. My reading of Clough’s text revealed many cogent similarities between his and Barone’s views on education, educational research and, most significantly for me, the fictionalising of educational research. Clough notes that his book is an attempt to demonstrate that, “Truths about educational issues and concerns can be told through consciously and explicitly fictional devices...fictional stories can make public those experiences and perceptions that other methodological approaches and research techniques are unable to reveal.”⁹² His stated wish is to let the stories he has composed speak for themselves, and his endeavours to do so serve as something of a model for my own imaginative reconstructions of MCAT participant experiences.

I was interested to read Clough’s⁹³ deconstruction of Wallace Stevens’ poem, *Blue Guitar*, in which he observes that Stevens has, at once, written a thesis on art and a work of art, noting that methodology is embodied in the text. Clough describes his stories as endeavouring to blur distinctions between form and content, researcher and researched, data and imagination. He insists that language itself, by itself, does the work of inquiry without recourse to meta-languages

⁹¹ Ibid, 77.

⁹² Clough, xii.

⁹³ Ibid, 2.

of methodology. He goes on to speak about the need “to trouble the common-sense understandings of data; to produce knowledge differently and to produce different knowledge”⁹⁴ as he explores the notion of what he calls, “experiments in making data.”

Like Barone, Clough positions himself within a post modern framework, and one task he sets himself is to determine the meaning, process and significance of post-modern inquiry. He attempts a rational justification for his fictional approaches believing they will stand up to rigorous academic critiques. Clough chooses art as a means (approach or method) where form and content are never easily separated, and states that, “The view developed through this text is that methods are uniquely created in the presence and service of quite particular contexts of moral and political need.”⁹⁵

Clough’s statement reminds me that the arts based learning (and teaching) approaches that I developed and that were embodied in the approach to learning within the MCAT program, were in his words, “uniquely created in the presence and service of quite particular contexts – perhaps of moral and political need.”⁹⁶ I have endeavoured to articulate this in my biography of the program (Chapter 4) as well as in some aspects of the imaginative reconstructions, (Chapter 5) but it seems worth foregrounding the fact at this stage of the study.

In the introduction to his text, Clough states that, “There is no chapter entitled ‘historical background to fictional methodology’ because the book is presented as an exemplar of the writing of its moment” and that the book is “Not a model to be followed but an example to be reflected on.”⁹⁷ This last statement exemplifies one of my aims within the creative/story approach to this research.

I was drawn to Clough’s analogy of the writer as architect contrasted with the builder; the latter asks, “How do I construct this building?” whereas the former asks, “What is this building for?” He states that, “Writing a story is not carried out outside of a need, a community, a context.” Further that, “In setting out to write a story, the primary work is in the interaction of ideas, in the act of thinking, and tuning into decision-making and focusing on the primary intent of the work.”⁹⁸ Clough’s analogy is congruent with my intentions for this inquiry.

Clough discusses his idea that narrative is useful in making the familiar strange, the strange familiar, and that in fictionalising educational experience, the researcher is free to “import

⁹⁴ Ibid, 3-4.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 8.

fragments of data from various real events.” These are woven into “stories which could be true; they derive from real events, feelings and conversations, but they are, ultimately fictions: versions of the truth woven from an amalgam of raw data, real details and (where necessary) symbolic equivalents.”⁹⁹ Clough goes on to say that for him, “The important moment of creation is synthetic when one draws purposefully and fitfully on data as well as dreams, hunches, histories, causes and cases.”¹⁰⁰

I found these statements to be particularly cogent and informative for my purposes within this study. Like both Clough and Barone, I drew on the accounts of learning events and experiences as well as my own hunches, histories and so on, to create fictional stories of lives lived and changed by those events and experiences.

Continuing to explain his approach, Clough states that one of the concerns of his book is to uncover, “Specifically with how inquiries using fictional forms may be realised in social science studies.” He continues,

To achieve this I have placed the major emphasis on demonstration. I draw on some critical argument, but devote the central part of the book to a collection of stories, which while derived from data, are ostensibly fictional. As such, they must speak for themselves.¹⁰¹

As if speaking directly to my concerns in constructing this study, Clough makes the following statement:

I realize, however, that I must speak on their behalf to a critically conscious research audience, and so in each case, I have assembled some fuzzy maps which show something of how the stories are found and how those processes might be explained within the furniture of a methodological critique.¹⁰²

For my purposes, Clough’s text was both instructive and affirming. I was led to contemplate whether my text needed to include some “fuzzy maps.” In any case, it affirmed my choice of research approach, in making as it does, a strong and cogent argument for fictional storytelling in, and as, educational research.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 11.

¹⁰² Clough, 11.

2.3.3 *Anna and Stephen Banks*

My encounter with the text edited by scholars, Anna and Stephen Banks was also significant for my research purposes and therefore, deserves an extended mention within this discussion. Its content clearly relates to both the conceptual methodology and to the practical methods for this inquiry. These authors note that the fifteen chapters explore in various ways, “The intersection of fiction and social research, offering a corrective to the traditional polarisation of the literary and the scientific.”¹⁰³ The following discussion and selected quotes are signposts toward the ways that this text has been both affirming and instructive to my creative research approach.

In their introduction to the text, Bochner and Ellis note that,

The text can also be read as a critical investigation of the culture of inquiry referred to as social research, an institutionalised form of life that too often has inhibited creativity, promoted conformity and retarded change in its prevailing conventions and where the texts that depict social life have the sound and feel of lived reality, giving context to the lives and actions they detail.¹⁰⁴

They continue that this would require attending more directly to the arts as in fiction, film, and areas such as, “Popular music, cultural history, creative writing and performance arts” and construing research as, “An activity of participation [wherein] writing is understood as an integral part of inquiry.”¹⁰⁵ They note that a curriculum that embraces these ideas would depart radically from the one most of us laboured under in graduate school. (It would) encourage the kind of self-examination risk-taking and creativity (needed) to clear the way for research that is] more interesting, more accessible, more evocative, more inspirational.¹⁰⁶ The reader of this text is invited to contemplate new possibilities for social research:

Where the prose is poetically crafted, where the author is construed primarily as a writer than exclusively as a researcher, where the reader is invited into the subjective and emotional world of the author, where at least as much attention has been given to the imagination as to the rigor of the inquiry, and where the texts that depict social life have the sound and feel of lived reality.¹⁰⁷

These ideas seemed to me as, paradoxically, both radical and eminently grounded.

¹⁰³ Anna Banks and Stephen Banks, eds., *Fiction and Social Research: By Ice or Fire* (London: Alta Mira Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, *Series Editors, “Ethnographic Alternatives” University of South Florida Introduction*, in Anna and Stephen Banks, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Banks and Banks, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Bochner and Ellis, 8.

In an interview with Anna and Stephen Banks that forms the first chapter of this text, Anna Banks notes their desire extend the horizons of social research. She makes the following suggestion:

To offer exemplars of alternative genres of writing that can bring the written product of social research closer to the richness and complexity of lived experiences. The text is a conscious attempt to bridge the gaps between author and reader, between fact and truth, between cool reason and hot passion, between personal and collective and between the drama of social life and legitimised modes of representing it.¹⁰⁸

As with my earlier comments within this discussion of the literature, I note that the ideas stated here replicate, in many ways, those that prevailed within the MCAT program. The program advocated an ethos of professional creative arts therapy practice that would, for clients and therapists alike, evoke the kind of creativity and imaginative risk-taking that marks a very real potential to change lives.

Likening their text to a research project, Anna and Stephen Banks describe how they mused about what they might get if they “asked people – academics and fiction-writers alike – to show how fiction and social research can interact.” Anna Banks says she was concerned about the nature of truth-telling and storymaking in academic writing, noting that, “facts don’t always tell the truth...and the truth in a good story – its resonance with our felt experience – sometimes must use imaginary facts.”¹⁰⁹ Anna Banks makes the following observation:

Fiction threatens the whole research enterprise. Research no matter how qualitative and interpretive, rests on fundamental beliefs in reliability, validity, and objectivity in reporting...a need for the narrative to be free of the researcher’s imagination.” On the other hand, because fiction necessarily uses the writer’s imagination, it vaporizes construct validity and sometimes even calls into question reliability in research.¹¹⁰

In what I read as a significant observation and one with which I wholeheartedly agree, Stephen Banks notes, “But what fiction can do that no other sort of expression does is evoke the emotion of felt experience and portray the values, pathos, grandeur and spirituality of the human condition.”¹¹¹

In summary, this text, written and edited by Anna and Stephen Banks, has guided the direction of this inquiry, in a similar fashion to those of Barone and Clough, and when taken together with

¹⁰⁸ Banks and Banks, 11-12.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 9-13.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 17.

their work, (as discussed above), it has affirmed my choice of a creative research process within this inquiry.

2.3.4 Other writers on fictionalising research

An article by Cate Watson¹¹² at the University of Stirling, UK examines the uses of fiction as data, analytical tool and representational mode in social and educational research. The purpose is to present an overview of the current uses being made of these approaches, illustrating different facets of engagement with fictional narratives, and to consider what can be gained (and also perhaps what might be lost) through their adoption.

In his article entitled *Fictional Theses*, Brent Kilbourn addresses the question, “Could a piece of fiction be accepted as a doctoral thesis?” The question sits within a more general discussion about the place of non-academic forms of writing (and other artistic forms) in educational inquiry. The author states, “I take the position that a piece of fiction certainly could count as a thesis, but I focus on qualities that we might regard as critical for a fictional thesis and on writing techniques that can enable those qualities”¹¹³

2.4 Concepts of Creativity and Imagination from the Arts Therapy Literature

The discussion contained in this short section has been included in my textual engagement with the literature because it relates to the broad aims of the study. It is an extension of the clarification of the terms, Creative and Creativity as found in The Introduction (Chapter 1), and relates more specifically to ideas and concepts that were used in the MCAT learning. For this particular study, it is my sense that to gain an understanding of the experience of arts based learning as it applies to creative arts therapy, it is essential to be able to refer to concepts of creativity and imagination as found in the arts therapy literature, and perhaps to a lesser extent, in the psychology literature.

Within the field of Creative Arts Therapy, creativity has been codified in some of the following ways: making one’s mark; making something that is new (for the creator); improvising and experimenting; allowing or encouraging one to notice the unusual, to take risks; forming something tangible or intangible in space and time such as an image (painting, photo), sound (music or rhythm), movement (dance), enactment (drama) and words (poem, prose). Therefore, in my search for concepts of creativity and imagination relative to the field of creative arts

¹¹² Cate Watson, “Staking a small claim for fictional narratives in social and educational research” *The Journal of Qualitative Research*, 11 no. 4 (2011), 395-408.

¹¹³ Brent Kilbourn, “Fictional Theses” in 1999 28: 27 *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER research News and Comment*. Online at <http://edr.sagepub.com/content/28/9/27>.

therapy, I drew on the works of selected authors whose views I value for their congruency. I have referred, mainly but not exclusively, to writers who are arts therapy practitioners and/or those whose work centres on the arts in education. However, as the following discussion illustrates, I have included ideas about creativity proposed by scholars from other disciplines, as these views seem consonant with those writing in the arts therapies.

For the purposes of this review, I turn first to dramatherapist, Bernie Warren whose text was required reading for students in the MCAT program and the first one they encountered focusing on the arts therapies. (Students often quoted Warren in their essays, especially his reference to the individual thumbprint, a concept that seemed to resonate for them). Warren defines creativity as, “The act of expressing self through a creative activity...nothing mystical about it. Each of us can create something meaningful to ourselves.” He goes on to say that we can only benefit from a creative experience if we “understand the techniques and ideas that allow us to be creative” and that, “The creative process actively engages the senses and the emotions and must be experienced – it cannot be reproduced.”¹¹⁴

Artist and art therapist, Marion Milner wrote that creativity implied a tolerance for what she called “oceanic undifferentiation” and about her art therapy work, she tells the following: of coming to understand that she herself had to reach a state that was, “partially undifferentiated, an indeterminate state – blankness, an empty circle, emptiness of ideas, apparent chaos” that is a precursor to creativity in the client.¹¹⁵ These ideas hark to those of Spinelli and his idea of “unknowning” discussed earlier.

Dramatherapist, Marina Jenkyns also equates creativity with chaos, and advocates trusting that chaos, as a means of making sense of whatever issue is being confronted or addressed. I took from her text an arresting concept for arts therapy practice (one I used repeatedly in facilitating students’ learning in the MCAT program). It was, as she states it:

The famous phrase in therapy, ‘stay with the chaos’ doesn’t mean stay there forever, but encourages us to allow unconscious processes to take their own time rather than prematurely worry them into submission by reason. The implication is that having stayed with the chaos, we can make sense of it.¹¹⁶

Writing in and about the arts therapies, Phil Jones does not so much define creativity as to describe some of its capabilities. For him, as a dramatherapist, “Creativity is linked to learning

¹¹⁴ Bernie Warren, *Using the Creative Arts in Therapy*, 2nd Edition (London: Routledge, 1998), 6-7.

¹¹⁵ Marion Milner, *The Hands of the Living God: an Account of a Psychoanalytic Treatment* (London: Routledge, 1969) 253, quoted in Martina Thomson. *On Art and Therapy*, 47-48.

¹¹⁶ Martina Jenkyns, *The Play’s the Thing*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 25.

and seen as a means of changing ways of functioning in terms of self-esteem.” Moreover that, “Some arts therapists have proposed that play and creativity in the arts have many common properties. The area of play...is seen as the origin of creativity.”¹¹⁷ This connection of creativity to play is one that occurs frequently in creative arts therapy literature and in practice.

Robert Landy, also a dramatherapist, writes that, “One common denominator of all early individual and cultural creative activity is its propensity to allow the creator to feel integrated while in the act of creation.” In what suggests both personal and professional examples, Landy observes that, “There is a sense of well-being present when a two-year-old discovers that he can create pleasing forms on his body, or when a four-year-old discovers she can whistle.”¹¹⁸

Reaching further back in time, one finds then-prominent philosopher Martin Buber writing on creativity in words that are instructive for the arts therapies. He posited that, “A tendency to create which reaches its highest manifestation in men (sic) of genius was present in however slight a degree in all human beings.” Furthermore that, “There exists in all men (sic) a distinct impulse to make things, an instinct that cannot be explained by theories of libido or will to power, but is disinterestedly experimental.” He gave what I read as a wonderful example, that of the infant making original sounds which he, delightfully, called “paroxysms of outbreking selfhood.”¹¹⁹

In tune with Buber’s notion of creativity as *paroxysms of outbreking selfhood*, music therapist, Bunt describes creativity as, “An insatiable curiosity for sounds and sound-making during early childhood that appears almost innate.” He also refers to creativity as something that, “Presents people with a challenging opportunity to look at aspects of themselves in a different light.”¹²⁰ Bunt cites Erich Fromm who wrote about a ‘creative attitude’, an important element of which is “the capacity to be puzzled” – a phrase I found to be beautifully evocative.

In his text that centred on creativity, psychologist Rollo May called for a necessary distinction between what he calls creativity’s “Pseudo forms on the one hand - that is, creativity as superficial aestheticism. On the other, its authentic form-that is the process of *bringing something new into being*.” May cites Plato who in his Symposium described the ‘true artists’ as those who give birth to some form of a new reality, “Poets and other creative persons who

¹¹⁷ Phil Jones, *The Arts Therapies: A Revolution in Health Care* (Hove: Brunner Routledge, 2005), 152-53.

¹¹⁸ Robert Landy, *Essays in Drmamtherapy* (New York: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 1996), 141-42.

¹¹⁹ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Routledge, 1946), 85.

¹²⁰ Leslie Bunt, *Music Therapy: An Art Beyond Words* (London: Routledge, 1994.) 75.

express being itself.”¹²¹ May interprets Plato as meaning “the ones who enlarge human consciousness.” A contemporary of May is educational psychologist, Jerome Bruner who defines creativity in much the same way, stating that, “It is an act that produces effective surprise” and that, “All forms of effective surprise grow out of a placing of things in new perspectives.”¹²² As if to build on these view, art therapists, Karkou & Sanderson whose work is mainly in UK schools, suggest that, “Creativity is the capacity to find new and unexpected connections, new relationships, and therefore, new meanings.”¹²³

Finally to one of my favourite authors, Rodari who, as noted in The Introduction (Chapter 1) writes about creativity as synonymous with *divergent thought*. He also equates creativity with playfulness, saying that,

A mind that is always at work is creative, a mind that always asks questions, discovers problems...that prefers fluid situations...that is capable of making autonomous and independent judgements...rejects everything that is codified, reshapes objects and concepts without letting itself be hindered by conformist attitudes. All these qualities are manifested in the creative process. And this process, it should be stressed, has a playful character. Always.¹²⁴

In summary, this brief review of ideas about creativity and imagination has pointed toward a notion of the transformative potential of the arts, a subject that was explored in some depth in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study and is referred to again in Chapter 7.

2.5 Summary and Concluding Remarks

This review, which I have identified as an engagement with the literature, has endeavoured to address the dual focus of this inquiry; examining arts based learning and fictionalising research. It has highlighted the relevant works of authors writing on the broad topics of the arts in education, arts based learning and fictionalising research. As I have reviewed the various articles, books and monographs on the subject of the arts in education, I have been struck by the extent to which what they are advocating seems to mirror the practice of creative arts therapy.

I should note that there is a body of literature that specifically relates to creative arts therapy; texts and articles written by creative arts therapists to inform readers about arts therapy practices. Some of this work is referred to in later chapters of this study.

¹²¹ Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 39, 40.

¹²² Jerome Bruner, *on Knowing: essays for the left hand* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 18.

¹²³ Vicky Karkou and Sanderson, *Arts Therapies: A research Based Map of the Field* (London: Lesevier Churchill Livingstone, 2006), 53.

¹²⁴ Rodari, 114.

The discussion has provided me with some important insights regarding arts based learning, as well as affirming some aspects upon which I have reflected, both as a researcher and earlier as coordinator for the MCAT program. It has highlighted potential themes of this inquiry.

The following chapter discusses the Methodologies and Methods that have guided this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Method

Sometimes a researcher or theorist is likened to a traveller from mythical times who sails off to strange and exotic places to eventually return to the common people in order to tell them fascinating stories about the way the world “really” is.¹²⁵

3. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodologies that underpinned the inquiry and the methods that were used to construct and guide the research. The inquiry was located under the broad umbrella of Qualitative Research, for which Denzin and Lincoln pose a generic definition that accords the researcher considerable latitude in approach. These authors state that,

It is the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials; artefacts, case studies; personal experiences; life story; interview, etc., thus deploying a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand, and demonstrating a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study.¹²⁶

Within the qualitative spectrum, this research was Arts based which, in the words of Barone and Eisner, “Represents an effort to explore the potentialities of an approach to representations that is rooted in aesthetic considerations and that, when it is at its best, culminates in the creation of something close to a work of art.”¹²⁷

I embraced an eclectic mix of methodology and method drawing on the works of selected research scholars. These include Eisner’s conceptual framework for Educational Criticism;¹²⁸ Barone’s guidelines for evaluating what he calls experienced curriculum;¹²⁹ Barone and Eisner’s concepts and practices of Arts Based Research, and Art based Educational Research;¹³⁰ Leavey’s work, Arts-based Research.¹³¹ The inquiry’s parallel research focus on methodology under the

¹²⁵ Richard Jaeger, “Theorizing, journeying, dwelling” in *Phenomenological Psychology* 11 (1975) 235-60.

¹²⁶ Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *The Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd Edition*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc., 2000), 3-4.

¹²⁷ Barone and Eisner, 1.

¹²⁸ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*.

¹²⁹ Tom Barone, *Aesthetics, Politics and Educational Inquiry: Essays and Examples* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 19-50.

¹³⁰ Barone and Eisner.

¹³¹ Patricia Leavey, *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practices* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2009).

umbrella of *Fictionalising Research and Storytelling* drew on the ideas of several authors writing within the genre of educational research. Where appropriate, I included relevant ideas about arts based research as found in the Arts Therapy literature.

3.1 Brief Outline of the Research Aims, the Method and the Research Questions

As noted in The Introduction (Chapter 1), I set out to enhance and extend my understanding of the meanings and qualities of arts based learning in the RMIT-MCAT program, and to do so through an exploration of the experiences of program participants. In addition, I wanted to undertake a creative, arts based research process, and to do that by crafting a fictional representation of those MCAT experiences, thus exploring the possibilities in such a representation. I undertook to do these two things in the following ways: I explored MCAT participants' arts based experiences through interviews and through source documents, and I created a fictional representation of this exploration; a portrayal of those experiences through storytelling.

To be more specific, I interviewed a selection of graduates and teachers who participated in the MCAT program. I reviewed written sources of data: journal notes from my time as program coordinator; student comments on course evaluations, workshop outlines and facilitator evaluations, notes from program committee meetings, and copies of my academic papers presented to conferences during the life of the MCAT program.

I reconstructed the data, composing imaginary conversations and a series of learning vignettes.

I examined the relevant literary genres: literature on Education through the Arts, the literature on Creative Arts Therapy, the literature on Arts based Research, and the literature on Fictionalising Research.

My rationale for choosing this approach was my wish to use, primarily, an arts based research method. Furthermore, I was interested to see how fictionalising the research would portray the arts based learning experiences, and convey the qualities and meanings of those experiences in the MCAT program.

Through the process of broadening my own understandings, I aimed to articulate and disseminate a picture of an arts based educational approach to the wider community of arts therapy educators, both nationally and internationally

The main research questions that underpinned the inquiry were as follows:

- *How was arts based learning and teaching experienced by participants of the MCAT program?*
- *What were the qualities and meanings of arts based learning in the MCAT program?*
- *What does a creative literary portrayal reveal about the MCAT educational experiences?*
- Secondary research questions of interest to the inquiry were:
 - *What is involved in the process of arts based research?*
 - *How do the arts contribute to learning?*

3.2 Background

When I began this PhD research project, my aim was to document the history of the RMIT-MCAT Program. In my view, it reflected a pedagogical process that was dynamic and seemed, to a large extent, innovative for its time. In search of an approach to this research frame, I examined the work of Robert Coles,¹³² which appeared to offer a method of documenting the educational processes and development of the RMIT program. However, further reading and reflection led to the realisation that historical review of the program and its educational development were not precisely where my interests lay. Rather, my research interest was two-pronged: I wanted to understand the experience of *arts based learning* that graduates of the program (and their teachers) had met with in the MCAT program, and I wanted to explore and portray those learning experiences through a literary art form; ergo, to conduct a creative, arts based research project. Initially my conundrum was *how* and *where* to include the stories of arts based learning experiences; it seemed to pose an undue level of complexity. However, I discovered that the emerging genre of arts based research offered an eclectic body of works that included a subset entitled “fictionalising research” and together these have informed my efforts to shape this study in ways congruent with my research aims.

Ultimately, I modified my aim of composing a full-blown story to one of composing a collection of vignettes embedded in imagined conversations among participants in the MCAT program about their arts based learning experiences. Therefore, my research has, of necessity, included an exploration into the craft of brief composition, writing dialogue and constructing conversations. A more extended narrative of my ‘research journey’ is contained in Section 3.8 of this chapter.

¹³² Coles, *Doing Documentary Work*.

At this juncture I would again refer to my exploration of van Manen's phenomenological construct of researching lived experience. I took considerable advice from my reading of his text and was mindful of his caution to researchers when examining experience. van Manen states,

All recollections of experiences, taped interviews about experience or transcribed conversations about experiences are already *transformations* of those experiences. Even life captured on light-sensitive tape is already transformed at the moment it is captured. So the upshot is that we need to find access to life's living dimensions while realising that the meanings we bring to the surface from the depths of life's oceans have already lost the natural quiver of their undisturbed existence.¹³³

I read this statement as a reminder that our stories are stories of experience, just that though not less important for being so. Or, similarly, as Rogers' observed when discussing his therapeutic encounters with clients and their stories that, "The map is not the territory."¹³⁴

3.3 Educational Critique: a lens for exploring meanings and qualities of arts based learning in the MCAT program

My review of various qualitative research approaches and methods as a means of addressing the aims of my inquiry led, increasingly, to the works of authors who seemed most attuned to the place of the arts in education and research. I was drawn to Eisner's¹³⁵ work on educational critique, in particular, his advice to researchers to note, "The importance of educational events and what those events do to our experience." From my reading, this advice dovetails with Cole's idea, noted earlier, of "[doing] justice to the complexity of observable life..."¹³⁶ I see both ideas as encapsulating the exploratory essence of one aim of my research which was the examination of arts based learning in the MCAT program. In the context of this inquiry, I defined *educational events* as the arts based learning encounters experienced within MCAT classes, workshops, studios, practicum placements and minor research projects. Through portrayals of these events, I sought to illuminate the meanings that students gave to their learning experiences as they reflected back on them as graduates and practicing creative arts therapists. My own reflections of these educational events have also contributed to the broad understandings that my research aims to uncover.

My thinking about learning events was extended in my reading of Clandinin and Connelly with their observation that, "An event is something not simply happening at the moment, but rather is

¹³³ van Manen, 54.

¹³⁴ Carl Rogers, (Source unknown).

¹³⁵ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, Chapter 3.

¹³⁶ Coles, *Doing Documentary Work*, 97.

an expression of something over time. Any event or thing has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future.”¹³⁷ This statement also served as a kind of anchor in my deliberations and my pedagogical decisions as MCAT coordinator around the arts based content in the MCAT courses as we broadened and extended the curricular focus into an arts based approach. I now see that these decisions may also be construed as ‘events’ and provide fruitful contemplations in reflecting on what such events did to my experience as teacher, supervisor and therapist. Examples are found within the vignettes (Chapter 5).

My approach this inquiry was also enhanced by Barone’s work, as noted above, on the ‘experienced curriculum’ which he defines as, “those events experienced by a particular student or set of students, or by the preponderance of students in a classroom” and his advice that this is not constituted by an examination of curricular plans or materials, but rather, “It is a critique of the manner in which students apparently perceive various aspects of classroom situations and events and how they respond to, and help shape, those situations and events.”¹³⁸ Barone’s words seemed to encapsulate one of my research aims, which was the wish to gain a deeper understanding of the process and practices of arts based learning among creative arts therapy students, and to do so through students’ experience of the arts based learning. Barone articulates the educational concept of ‘experience’ so well that it is difficult to find other words to précis his own. Hence, I set out the following quotes, which, I repeat, encapsulate my own thinking in terms of my experience with the MCAT students and what I perceived to be theirs with learning in the MCAT program:

An experience after all, consists of a dialogue between an actor and his or her surroundings. It is an interactive process composed of continuous transactions between a person and the shifting and shifted environment. An experience is a complete reaction of a whole self to a situation confronting it, a qualitative response composed of intellectual and emotional and wilful elements. And aspects of a present experience are understood in terms of previous ones.¹³⁹

This work of Barone has provided my research with useful guidance, and is in tune with that of Eisner writing on educational criticism.

Eisner’s¹⁴⁰ extensive treatise on Educational Criticism sets the task of the educational critic as one of “transforming the qualities of a work of art, of a school or of the act of teaching and

¹³⁷ Clandinen and Connelly, 29.

¹³⁸ Barone, *Aesthetics*, 20.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 86.

learning into some form of public expression that illuminates, interprets and appraises the qualities that have been experienced.” He advises that within the context of educational criticism,

There are no rules of equivalence, no one-to-one correspondence of reference to symbol. Thus every act of criticism is a reconstruction [that] takes the form of an argued narrative, supported by evidence that is never incontestable; there will always be alternative interpretations of the “same” play.”¹⁴¹

I take these statements as both guidance and challenge; to approach this inquiry with equal measures of rigour and poetic licence. I’m reminded that Barone and Eisner also recommend this combination in their outline for an Arts based Educational Research approach (see Section 3.5 for a detailed discussion).

Eisner defines four dimensions of educational criticism as description, interpretation, evaluation and thematics, and he emphasises that these categories do not form a prescribed structure, but “are intended to have heuristic utility...as tools with which to work, not as rules to follow.”¹⁴² I note here that I am familiar with the idea of heuristic utility. Moreover, the deeply reflective aspect of the heuristic approach is congruent with much of my thinking, in terms of this research, my role in the MCAT program, and my general approach to teaching and therapy practice.

Concerning Eisner’s paradigm of educational criticism, the idea of ‘argued narrative’ seems a fit with both an exploration and exposition of MCAT students’ experiences of arts based learning, as well as to my planned fictionalising of the data. As noted, the model of educational criticism gives the researcher who uses qualitative educational inquiry considerable latitude. In my view, it is congruent with what I see as an essential quality of arts based research. Eisner discusses the high premium qualitative inquiry places on the idiosyncratic, as well as on the exploitation of the researcher’s unique strengths noting, in what I interpret as a fundamental strength, that investigators will do things “in ways that make sense to them, for the problem in which they are interested, the aptitude they possess and the context in which they work.”¹⁴³

Eisner makes an important observation concerning interviews, stating that, “We need to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings, their lives. Conducting a good interview is like participating in a good conversation.”¹⁴⁴ I would hope to show that the interviews conducted for this inquiry were, indeed, akin to good and interesting conversations.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 86.

¹⁴² Ibid, 88.

¹⁴³ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 169-170.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 183.

Finally, I liken Eisner's views on the importance of storytelling in educational research as something of a mirror or a reflecting platform for my study. He notes that, "Qualitative studies of classrooms, teachers and schools are usually expressed in stories", and poses the question: "How is the researcher to take events occurring in real time and reduce them into...an educational criticism of what the observer – the educational connoisseur – has experienced?"¹⁴⁵ Again, I read this as a challenge to the researcher, one that I welcome in terms of my storied approach to this inquiry.

3.4 Arts based Research

Barone and Eisner write that, "The term 'arts based research' originated in 1993 at Stanford University, when Eisner provided an institute for "university scholars and school practitioners that would help them understand what research guided by aesthetic features might look like."¹⁴⁶ Convinced that the premises, principles, and procedures employed by artists can serve certain purposes for engaging in social research, the first institute was followed by seven more between 1993 and 2005, so that, "What began as a glimmer became a beacon for many researchers looking for another way to think about research and how it can be conducted."¹⁴⁷

Leavey's work on arts based research approaches accords with that of Barone and Eisner, and others, whilst breaking new ground as well. She reiterates its potential to offer research scholars and students at all levels, "New pathways for creating knowledge within and across disciplinary boundaries from a range of epistemological and theoretical perspectives" and "new ways for thinking about their artist-researcher-teacher identities."¹⁴⁸ Leavey describes a major shift in academic research between 1970 and 1990 and attributes the change in part to the work done in the arts therapies, noting that, "Although there are differences between therapeutic practices and research practices, there is no doubt that knowledge developed from the practices of arts-base therapies has informed our understanding of arts based research practices."¹⁴⁹

It seems to me that her impetus in foregrounding process within the arts based approach may derive from her ability to attune with the arts therapies. Clearly, Leavey's statement that, "The creative arts help qualitative researchers pay close attention to how the complex process of meaning-making and idea percolation shapes research"¹⁵⁰ is in keeping with precepts that

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 189.

¹⁴⁶ Barone and Eisner, *Arts based research*, ix.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, x.

¹⁴⁸ Leavey, ix-x.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 9-10.

underpin arts therapy practices. She draws attention to “the intellectual chaos that is the incubation phase prior to meaning-making” a clear reference, in my view, to that which takes place within an artistic creative process. I was interested to read her lament of the fact that in understandings of research processes, this phase has, previously, only been given lip-service by qualitative researchers. I believe that Leavey lays a definitive claim for acceptance of arts based approaches into the genre of qualitative research with the following statements:

Arguably the two phenomena that have most propelled the arts into qualitative research practices are the power and immediacy of artistic medium and the oppositional possibilities of art. Furthermore that, the arts as representational form accomplishes two things formerly absent from social science research reports: the appeal extends beyond academia bringing social research to broad audiences, and the arts have capability to evoke emotions, promote reflection and transform the way people think.¹⁵¹

Leavey’s emphasis on the concept of process as a central feature of a qualitative research approach is, in my view an important contribution to research pedagogy, as is her declaration that, “The aim of arts based research approaches is resonance, understanding, multiple meanings, dimensionality and collaboration.”¹⁵² Indeed, within this inquiry, these stated aims are ones that underpinned my search for acceptance of an arts based representation of the research data and practice. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that my discovery of Leavey’s text was like a surprise encounter with a new ‘old friend.’ I was heartened to read her acknowledgement of the influence of the arts therapies on the emerging genre of arts based research, together with her articulation of premises about the power of the arts to influence and transform lives, premises that underpin arts based learning and arts based therapies.

3.5 Arts based Educational Research

I return here to the work of Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner as they are among the leading proponents of arts based educational research. As noted in section 3.3, they have, over the past two decades, been at the forefront of a movement of scholars and practitioners calling for an approach to educational inquiry that embraces an artistic perspective. The following discussion outlines some of the conceptual notions that these authors identify as necessary components for an arts based educational research paradigm.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 255.

¹⁵² Ibid, 15.

Barone and Eisner advocate certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that they see as defining an arts based inquiry, and whilst acknowledging that these elements are present to a greater or lesser extent in all educational research, they advocate for a greater prominence of these qualities if an educational inquiry is to be considered arts based. Their list includes seven features as follows:

1. *The Creation of a Virtual Reality* that as with all good art, engages the audience, viewer or reader, speaking directly to nearby concerns whilst raising questions about them. Their term, ‘composed apparition’ denotes a virtual whole wherein an imaginary world is conjured up - “a location near enough to a previously experienced object to recognize it, but far enough to place it in a revealing (sometimes startling) new context.”
2. *The Presence of Ambiguity* provided by gaps, a sense of indefiniteness, and/or the presence of dilemmas in a text (or in any work of art) that allow the reader to read or experience it from a variety of perspectives.
3. *The Use of Expressive Language* which is predicated on those literary devices that express and connote rather than direct and denote. “Artistic symbols are metaphors and metaphors recreate experience through the form they take, never signifying a closed, literal meaning but enabling the reader to experience that which they express.”
4. *The Use of Contextualized and Vernacular Language*, which is a characteristic of artistic language. “Arts based inquirers...depend on vernacular forms of speech that are more directly associated with lived experiences.” This in contrast to theoretical speech, which has a tendency to be abstract and specialised, and designed for technical purposes.
5. *The Promotion of Empathy*, which is achieved through the use of contextualised, expressive and vernacular language. Such language is “uniquely qualified to produce vivid depictions and allows for re-creation of the mental atmosphere, thoughts, feeling and motivations of the characters in a story, drama, or essay.” This in turn creates, for the reader, a vicarious experience of events.
6. *Personal Signature of the Researcher/Writer* is embodied in the unique vision of the author of an arts-base inquiry. “The author shapes the reality in accordance with his or her own particular thesis or controlling insight, which the text is composed to suggest.”
7. *The Presence of Aesthetic Form* as found in arts based educational research texts is distinct from the traditional quantitative research texts in which the format tends to be standardised. Following the Western tradition of the story with its plot, action, denouement and resolution, the story with an arts based educational research text ends with the creation of “a new vision of certain educational phenomena” such that readers discover and/or re-create new meaning, “and old values and outlooks are challenged even negated.” These ultimately, are the purposes of art.¹⁵³

The authors caution that not all arts based educational inquiry will exhibit every feature contained in the list, but they note that in general, the more of these that are present, the more

¹⁵³ Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner, “Arts-based Educational Research” in *Complimentary Methods for Research in Education 2nd Edition*, Richard M. Jaeger ed. (Washington DC: American Educational Association, 1988), 73-80.

artistic will be the research text. They also note that the most prominent and accepted arts based genres are educational criticism and narrative storytelling. However, an extended list sets out the kinds of literary forms of educational research that may be classified as arts based. These are case studies, literary history, literary ethnography, life histories, teacher lore and student lore. And finally, Barone and Eisner note that, “With the growth of acceptance by educationists of researcher-artists, the line between academy-based and lay-produced texts about educational matters has begun to fade” and that, “Arts based texts exhibiting the kind of expressive vernacular language [as described] are often more accessible to lay audiences than are technically oriented texts.”¹⁵⁴ In my view, that is certainly just one of the many arguments in favour of arts based educational research.

3.6 Fictionalising Educational Research: a Creative Approach

The practice of fictionalising research is a somewhat novel approach but, as discussed at length in the review of the literature (Chapter 2) it is one for which a notable body of literature now exists and continues to grow. That discussion of the works of academic authors Anna and Steven Banks, Tom Barone, and Peter Clough is extended at this point through a discussion of writing and storytelling as research, with particular references to authors, Laurel Richardson, Peter Reason and Peter Hawkins, Max van Manen and Peter Willis. Overall, this array of writers attests to a wide academic and professional acceptance of this approach within the ever-burgeoning category of qualitative and arts based research. As an especially salient approach, I have found that an early essay by Barone¹⁵⁵ (discussed in greater detail in section 3.7.1) provided me with additional modelling for the development of creative educational storytelling.

3.6.1 Writing as Research/Storytelling as Research

Addressing the concept of Writing as Research, I have drawn on the ideas of Laurel Richardson and Max van Manen, and on Storytelling as research, from the work of Peter Reason and Peter Hawkins.

Richardson "speaks of her, “affectionate irreverence toward qualitative research” when she declares her consideration of “writing as a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic and that writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 78.

¹⁵⁵ Barone, *Aesthetics*, Chapter 2.

analysis.”¹⁵⁶ Richardson advocates for the expansion of readership of qualitative research through excellent writing - as inquiry for both the self and for others. I found her views to be affirming to my purposes in this study as well as congruent with other scholars.

Like Richardson, van Manen devotes a substantial discussion to the practice of writing as research. His statement that, “Writing teaches us what we know and in what way we know what we know.”¹⁵⁷ to be both cogent and personally relevant. As if talking out loud to himself, he muses on the writer’s universal struggles to make the text say what the writer is thinking even whilst reclaiming one’s own knowledge. It reads as a writer’s hermeneutic circle. In addition, van Manen’s chapter on “Anecdote as a Methodological Device”¹⁵⁸ provides important guidance to this study, placing anecdotes within the realm of important research tools. van Manen’s definition of anecdote as a short narrative of an interesting incident seems consonant with my definition of a vignette as short literary sketch that describes a scene or incident. In as much as I am using, for this study, short narratives which I have identified as vignettes, but which could just as well be read as anecdotes, I was interested to read this particular section of van Manen’s work and to be guided by it in my research process. Thus, the works of both Richardson and van Manen discussing ideas about writing as research have proved important for my purposes. Furthermore, their ideas connect easily with those of academics writing on storytelling as research.

Reason and Hawkins write about storytelling as an emergent paradigm of inquiry, designating it as “a blend of careful, cautious and bold creative knowing.” These authors distinguish two modes of thinking about experience and how it is processed: *explanation*, which endeavours to be objective and analytical and sees experience as a basis for theory-building, and *expression* which requires the inquirer to be deeply involved in the experience and its meanings. They state that “We work with the meaning of experience when we tell stories, write and act in plays, write poems, meditate, create pictures, etc.”¹⁵⁹

The work of Peter Willis in which he writes on the subject of expressive research, relates quite closely to the work of Reason and Hawkins, and also provides important guidance to the formulation of this study. Willis notes that, “Expressive research seeks to generate a reply to questions asked of some event or action such as, What was it like? or How did it feel? To portray

¹⁵⁶ Laurel Richardson, *Fields of Play: Constructing and Academic Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

¹⁵⁷ van Manen, 127.

¹⁵⁸ van Manen, Chapter 12.

¹⁵⁹ Reason and Hawkins, *Human Inquiry in Action* (New York: Sage Publications, 1988), 79-101.

what a social phenomenon is like for those who experience it rather than those who analyse or categorize it.”¹⁶⁰ Willis goes on to describe what he calls, “Experienced knowledge” a phenomenon he sees as, “Partly subjective, partly objective, the presentation of which draws on artistic knowledge and forms.”¹⁶¹ Further, he notes that, “The text in response to the ‘what’s it like?’ question is a portrayal, and the means to creating it involves the rhetorical resources of aesthetics and the imagination – art, metaphor and contemplation – to capture, confront, enrich, and even arrest the reader.”¹⁶²

And indeed, within this inquiry, and with the guidance of these authors, I have sought to construct a creative text that is enriching, engaging and perhaps even somewhat arresting. Certainly I hope it is one that will, among other things, stimulate reflection and discussion about educational inquiry, especially as it relates to the education of arts therapists.

3.7 Method – the Research Practices of an arts based, creative approach to fictionalising data and to an educational critique.

As noted in the discussions above, the preeminent authors whose work I have discussed appear to agree on an arts based approach as a means of conducting and construing research in ways that resonate for the reader and for the researcher. Reason and Hawkins write of developing research approaches that would express “the liveliness, the involvement and even the passion of the experiences being researched.”¹⁶³ Patricia Leavey declares that, “Arts-based researchers are not “discovering” new research tools, they are *carving* them.”¹⁶⁴

This section explicates the ways in which I apply the principles of these research epistemologies; in other words the ‘How’ of this research project. I note that in his discussion regarding the choice of methods, Jaeger cautions against the ‘slavish’ embrace of a particular method for all educational research, being far less certain that well-developed and understood methods were always likely to be superior. Jaeger invokes the work of Alfred North Whitehead with the observation that, “Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with a good methodology ... to set limits to speculation is treason to the future.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Willis, *Being, seeking, telling: expressive approaches to qualitative adult education research* (Flaxton, QLD: Post press, 2000), 2.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶² Ibid, 3.

¹⁶³ Reason and Hawkins, 79.

¹⁶⁴ Leavey, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Jaeger, 23-24.

3.7.1 Educational Critique

The structure of the educational critique that seeks to illustrate some of the meanings and qualities of arts based learning in the MCAT program refers to Eisner's model as described in Section 3.3. It acknowledges his determination that what he sets out should be seen as a guide, and not a structural model to which an inquiry must adhere. The educational critique and its attendant storytelling also draw on Barone's¹⁶⁶ essay, as noted above. Barone discusses the importance of four facets of content and style; theme, landscape character and plot. Theme, he says, is "a central insight or controlling idea that gives unity to the complex operations of appreciation and disclosure of an investigation"¹⁶⁷ and reflects the "controlling or central idea that provides coherence to any piece of fiction, be it short story, novel, film or drama."¹⁶⁸ Landscape gives a personal view of the classroom milieu with images that capture the people in their surroundings, and the mood of the place where learning events are happening. Characterization allows the reader to see actions and the motivation for them. This is augmented by fully developed dialogue that, "penetrates to the core of the personalities being heard from, thus transporting the reader into intimate encounters."¹⁶⁹ The fourth facet, plot, is the sequence of events around which a story is comprised, and it requires an arrangement of insights as well as events, so as to advance the central intention of a story; such an arrangement need not be in chronological order. I note that, as with Eisner, Barone emphasises these ideas as guides and not as rules to govern educational inquiry or critique.

The creative text of this inquiry draws on a variety of sources that include oral accounts through interviews with MCAT participants, written reflections from my teaching journals, course descriptions from the MCAT Program documents, minutes of Higher Degree Committee meetings about arts based minor research projects, and sundry miscellaneous recollections. The stories derived from any or all of these are vehicles that hope to further the analysis and interpretation of the arts based learning and to discern themes that may emerge.

It is my expectation that the concurrent compositional writing of the vignettes (see 3.5.1) will provide additional and/or corroborating sources of information for educational critique, just as the same will be true in reverse – that documenting the arts based learning events will advance the imaginative reconstructions.

¹⁶⁶ Barone, *Aesthetics* 29-44.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 31.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 32.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 33.

3.7.2 The text of the Creative Inquiry

Addressing the actual structure of the creative text of my inquiry, one of my first tasks was to devise a coherent narrative structure, or to find one that I might emulate, and here I note that the metaphor of a journey is one that has been present from the beginning of my research. Interested colleagues and friends suggested a portrayal of a kind of ‘pilgrims’ progress’ of the participants’ arts based learning experiences in the MCAT program. Subsequent conversations on the subject of literary texts that could provide a model brought forth such titles as *Pilgrims’ Progress*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Around the World in 80 Days*. Ultimately, the text that seemed to resonate most clearly with my creative needs was Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* with its particular contrapuntal structure. The following excerpt helps to elaborate on my choice.

In his Introduction to *The Grapes of Wrath*, Robert DeMott¹⁷⁰ relates the following account:

In early July 1938, Steinbeck told literary critic Harry T. Moore that he was improvising what was for him a ‘new method’ of fictional technique: one which combined a suitably elastic form and elevated style to express the far reaching tragedy of the migrant drama. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, he devised a contrapuntal structure, which alternates short lyrical chapters of exposition and background pertinent to the migrants as a group (Chapters 1,3,5,7,9...) with the long narrative chapters of the Joad family’s dramatic exodus to California (Chapters 2,4,6,8,10...)

DeMott describes how Steinbeck structured his novel by juxtaposing lengthy narrative chapters about the Joad family’s progress out of the dust-bowl, with “an atemporal, universal, synoptic view of the overall migrant condition” comparing this framework with Melville’s structure for his novel, *Moby Dick*.

As I reread *The Grapes of Wrath* I became particularly attuned to its structure, and my imagination was captured by the idea of devising a contrapuntal structure for my own creative text. As if to underscore those aspects that drew me to Steinbeck’s structural model, I noted Barone’s reference to *The Grapes of Wrath* in his discussion entitled, Educational Inquiry and Critical Storytelling. He comments that,

This novel’s power to persuade emerges not from within a rhetoric of theory, whether scientific, philosophical or critical. It emanates from a careful and committed empiricism that is made manifest through such features of writing as powerfully “thick” description and invented but convincing dialogue.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Robert DeMott, “Notes” in John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Penguin Books, 1939/1992), xii.

¹⁷¹ Barone, *Aesthetics*, 197.

Hence, I have adapted Steinbeck's structure, using his model of juxtaposed or contrapuntal chapters. Within my text, the imaginary conversations between and among MCAT participants (about their experiences of arts based learning and what these meant for them) are interspersed with learning vignettes that are narrated in the third-person. Juxtaposed to these imaginative reconstructions are my personal commentaries and reflections about arts based experiences and learning events, and the unfolding program. These reflections contain my interpretations of the learning experiences and their relationship to creative arts therapy practice; they read as first-person narratives.

Thus, this creative text endeavours to illustrate the experiences of arts based learning in the MCAT program from three perspectives: through the imagined conversations among MCAT graduates, through the learning vignettes, and through my reflections and commentary. I had envisioned that the actual writing of the text would largely reveal its coherence.

3.8 Gathering the Research Data

The process of gathering the data for this study involved face-to-face interviews with some of the MCAT program's graduates and former teachers, and a review of program documents together with my own journal notes.

The interviews were done with respondents to an invitation, widely disseminated to former participants in the MCAT program. From the e-mail and postal addresses that were available at the time the program closed, I sent out about thirty-five invitations for an audiotape interview that I noted would be about one hour in length. I provided a list of questions (see Appendix A7: Interview Questions) and noted in the invitation that I anticipated the interview would be conversational and would allow for a wide coverage of reflections and recollections on the part of the interviewee. From this process I received sixteen affirmative responses and I interviewed all of these respondents.

The program and course documents that I reviewed included those that I have listed in the Appendix. As noted in an earlier discussion, they included the original Course Proposal Document, the Program Outline of Structure and Content, copies of Course and Workshop Proposals, Higher Degree by Coursework Committee minutes, and perhaps by far the most helpful, a vast collection of Course Evaluations (see Appendix 7 Sample Course Evaluation) submitted by students over the life of the program. Students submitted these evaluations anonymously, and so the comments were honest and forthright about how they had experienced the learning and teaching. The other documents in my review were my own journal notes, and

copies of academic papers that I presented at different conferences about the MCAT program and its approach to teaching creative arts therapy students. All of these documents are reflected in the research process and the text that is the Arts Based Project (Chapter 5).

3.8 My Research Journey – a narrative account

If I were a vigilant diary-keeper, I could, at this point invoke a chronological account of the +++ years it took me to figure out what it was that I actually wanted this research project to look and sound like. In some ways, I have known all along, and in others it has been an ongoing process of ‘dancing around’ the research with various and varying ideas about the subject of arts based learning and teaching, whilst trying to lock down a focus – what I actually wanted to investigate. To some extent, this is due, I think, to the enormity, the myriad possibilities in which one might describe, explore, investigate, constitute – this list goes on – the material that emanates from the learning and teaching experiences within the MCAT program. I do know that from the beginning and throughout this process, I remained focused on my interest in exploring the arts based experiences of learning and teaching, and true to my wish to document this exploration through the medium of storytelling.

In the initial proposal of the research project, I had thought that I wanted to contextualise this exploration within a history of the program – tell its story from inception to demise, emphasising its uniqueness and the particulars of its pedagogy. Hence my first research question, read as:

How do the Arts inform meaning in the creativity and learning processes embedded in a creative arts therapy education program?

This question was phenomenological in orientation and would have endeavoured to discern meaning through a consideration of themes, and so on. However, I was not entirely comfortable with the question, as it did not seem to articulate the breadth of my interests. I worked to refine the research proposal, reflecting that perhaps what I wanted to do was examine the evolving learning paradigms, which I had, in collaboration with colleagues and some students, put into place as coordinator of the program. Thus I revised the research question to read as:

What is my lived experience of facilitating learning in a creative arts therapy program, as explicated through autobiographical stories?

This would have constituted a heuristic research project, an approach with which I am very familiar through my extensive supervision of students’ minor research projects that have used the heuristic model. I realised, however, that I was interested to highlight more than just my own, singular experiences and resulting views, and that the study would be enriched by the inclusion

of accounts of the experiences of former students and teacher/facilitators. Furthermore, that to *examine the intersection of art, learning and therapy* that this MCAT program provided to students, and to discern the inherent meanings attached to that intersection might be of interest and use. However, reflection on that research focus led me to see it as a purely theoretical exploration and, while interesting, seemed a bit soulless, especially in light of the dynamic, human interplay of ideas and experiences that in my view, epitomised the life of the MCAT program.

I contemplated the format for such a study and decided that what was called for was a written documentary of the learning and teaching experiences as these had been experienced during the life of the program, with a view to possibly unearthing new knowledge about learning and teaching creative arts therapy. This idea led to a close reading of Coles¹⁷² writing on constructing a documentary, which in turn suggested that the research question should be formulated as:

What does the experience of creating a documentary of stories, of lived encounters with the arts in learning and teaching creative arts therapy, reveal? (Or)

What is the meaning of working with the arts in teaching and learning creative arts therapy, as expressed in a documentary?

These two research questions indicate a slightly different focus; the first is on the revelations that emanate from the experience of creating a documentary, (still a heuristic study) and the second focuses on the meaning to be derived from an examination of working with the arts in learning and teaching creative arts therapy which, incidentally would be laid out in a documentary.

On reflection, it seems that I was reaching for a study that would both explicate arts based learning and teaching from two perspectives - my own extensive experience and that of students and teachers in the MCAT program – and allow me to explore a creative process for compiling and writing these stories. I conceptualised that the latter would direct my attention to the art of storytelling - a genre that I particularly love and about which I could see the benefits for explicating the student and teacher accounts of their experiences.

Hence, I began to play with the idea of creating a ‘tale,’ one that would weave an imaginative story based loosely on accounts of former students and teachers’ experiences, along with my own experiences as coordinator, within the MCAT program. From this process came the research questions:

¹⁷² Coles, *Doing Documentary Work*.

What is it like, as a storyteller, to create an imaginative tale about arts based learning, teaching and therapy experiences?

Discarded as another heuristic study

How does the art form of storytelling contain and convey experience?

Discarded as it would be a study about the art form of storytelling

What does my creative tale portray about the lived experiences of arts based learning, teaching and therapy?

This last question seemed “closer to the mark” in terms of what I knew I wanted the study to do – to explicate and portray the arts based learning and teaching experiences of former students, teachers and myself in story form. This would be, primarily, an art-based research inquiry, reflecting the central component of the program – its essential heart.

Throughout this process of trying to “get a handle” on the crux of the study, I found that whilst my creative impetus was toward an art-based project, my intellect and my academic socialisation kept dismissing a creative work as not rigorous enough to be included in the category of PhD. How could it be read as a real thesis? This put me at cross-purposes with myself, and my response to the frustration that this engendered was to declare that, “well perhaps I just won’t write it as a PhD – it will just be something else – a book perhaps.” But, the research project would not let go of me; I kept thinking about how to formulate a research question, how to set out a research approach, how to construct a text, and so on.

There was a wonderful collection of stories waiting to be told, a plethora of (in my opinion) great ideas for arts based teaching and learning and its application to therapy contexts in general. Hence, the result, not surprisingly, has been a seemingly endless array of introductory chapters some of which are written in an academic-exegesis style, others written as the opening to an imaginative tale, and others, as some combination thereof. In meeting with colleagues, fellow students also working on PhDs, I had, on more than one occasion, expressed my surprise, dismay and, at times, incredulity that after these many years of contemplating, reflecting and writing into this study, I seem little closer to any degree of certainty – in fact less so than when I began with a proposal. When I look back on the dates of earlier writing, the most outstanding pattern seems to be one of surges of writing, interspersed with long periods of ‘drought’ in which little or nothing was produced.

Yet, if indeed this is, primarily, a creative project, and I give myself the same advice that I have given to the students I have taught and supervised, then I might say that the work has to gestate

and emerge/be borne. I endeavoured to set aside my fear-of-failure as well as my penchant for procrastination with all of its generally accepted excuses.

One significant element in my attempts to ascertain a direction for the thing was my concern about how much of myself to include in the study. As noted above, it could very well be a study about my own experiences of coordinating this program over eleven and a half years, and the ways in which I developed pedagogy for creative arts therapy education. And this could have been done with significant scholarship and rigour. But I did not want this text to be a recasting of *My Brilliant Career*, an autobiography of little interest to anyone, least of all, me. Another, very legitimate concern, if one reads examiner responses to the work they are called upon to examine, was my fear of producing a verifiable, historical account of the MCAT program, which although chronologically accurate, would ultimately bore the pants off the reader, being a study deemed ‘interesting’ but relegated to an ever-expanding shelf of unread tomes.

Inevitably I kept coming back to the notion of storytelling; of casting the centrepiece of the study in an imaginative literary form. Equally inevitable was my supervisor’s response, to this: “And what are you going to do with the stories?” The answer to that question seemed self-evident to me, but evidently was not so, and until I could make it clear to others I couldn’t go forward. However, as I began to get back to work on the research project, following the final closure of the MCAT program and another hiatus of several months, this review allowed me to feel as though I had achieved some clarity about conceptualisation, focus, approach and method.

Taking my own advice, I began with the importance, nay the essential requirement of foregrounding the art. This study had, first and foremost, to be a creative, arts based research study. The art would take a literary form that speaks of and to the arts based learning and teaching experiences, an imaginative reconstruction of former student and teacher accounts of their MCAT experiences. And so it has.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has discussed the Methodology and Methods that have guided and informed this Study.

The following chapter is an overview of the MCAT program. As such, it sets the context for the study and it informs the reader of how the program looked (and sounded) from its launch to its close. It describes the evolving approach to learning and teaching creative arts therapy students; the educational values embedded in that approach, the effects that students and teachers had on

the way the program was offered particular changes and amendments that contributed to the evolving curriculum, one whose focus of learning became increasingly arts based.

Chapter 4

The Context of the Inquiry - The MCAT Program

4. Introduction

This chapter comprises a biography of the MCAT program. It explores the various factors that mediated its growth, the changes that took place, and the ways in which learning and teaching experiences affected the program. It sets out the context of the study and is a precursor to approaching The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5).

When I recall the program from beginning to end, as was my involvement in it, I think of it as like viewing a triptych, or watching a play in three acts; it began with a certain look and sound, it ended looking and sounding similar yet different, and in between, a great deal of movement and change took place. This narrative (with subtitles) starts with the launch of the program, moves through the dynamics of its evolution in its middle years, to culminate with its closure eleven and a half years later. It begins with a description of the program's initial structures and curriculum, its stated approach to learning, its teaching staff, and the students it attracted. It describes the educational landscape, both the physical properties and the learning and teaching process. It goes on to highlight the processes and the dynamics that moved its content and approach toward an arts based platform of learning, with a discussion of the educational values that shaped and reshaped the program. It looks at what mattered and why in the course of the student education, as well as the various influences of students, teachers, and I as program coordinator, along with a burgeoning arts therapy practice literature. The narrative concludes with a picture of the program in its last two years when the university decreed its closure.

4.1 Act 1: The Curtain Rises on the MCAT Program

The RMIT~MCAT program originated as the vision of Professor Martin Comte who was Dean of the RMIT Faculty of Education. Martin was at the centre of the planning and the launch of the program July 1996 – semester two of that academic year. The University continued to offer the program for eleven and a half years. It was unusually situated under the umbrella of three university faculties, Education, Art and Nursing, and was, for eight years administered by the Faculty (later School) of Nursing. In 2004, the program was moved to the School of Education

where the (lamentable) decision was made in May 2006, to discontinue it. Amidst ongoing student and community protest the program was closed in December 2007.

The launch of the MCAT program was a time of enormous anticipation among those in the Melbourne community whom the university had canvassed for interest in such a program. Several members of the first cohort of students were among the many who had responded favourably during the program's planning stage. Hence, this group expressed a collective sense of excitement as they envisioned the myriad possibilities of what might be gleaned from this new and (for Australia) innovative program. Educationist Maxine Greene describes such possibilities as "imaginative adventures into meaning that take one beyond the rational and practical realm of true and false."¹⁷³ That seems an apt description of what was taking place at this time with this new program. The program quite quickly became known as a vibrant centre of learning for prospective students of creative arts therapy, attracting students from interstate and overseas as well as from the local communities.

4.1.1 Program Structures

A close reading of the RMIT Master of Creative Arts Therapy Course Proposal Document April 1995 (hereafter referred to as the Course Proposal Document) reveals the design for a practice oriented course of study in Creative Arts Therapy, one that introduced a field of learning that was interdisciplinary and distinctively intermodal. The following excerpt from that Document speaks to the vision of the program's place within the community.

3.1 The Master of Creative Arts Therapy has the potential to make a significant contribution to the community. It is anticipated that students for the course will come from a variety of disciplines including Nursing, Education, Counselling and the Arts.

The MCAT program set out to respond to the expressed needs and desires of interested people from a range of backgrounds and professions. It offered an articulated, coursework Masters degree in Creative Arts Therapy; students could exit with a Graduate Diploma after two years of study of foundational knowledge, or complete a Masters degree on completion of three years of study that included a supervised practicum and a minor research project.

The program was structured so that students could undertake it in a part time study mode, although visa regulations required international students to enrol in full-time mode. Students came from various professional backgrounds and academic experiences including, as the Course

¹⁷³ Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 69.

document suggested, from fine arts, teaching, nursing, social work and psychology. As a way of attracting and supporting students most of whom were in full time employment, all classes were scheduled on weekends, and were held 2-3 weeks apart for any one course.

Learning was both teacher-facilitated and student self directed and took various forms. Small-groups for creative work and discussion were the classroom norm, used for ongoing learning as well as collaborative preparations for in-class presentations. Fieldwork for individuals and groups, interactive discussions, occasional didactic mini-lectures, arts-focused creative learning modules, and studio workshops were all part of a student's learning experiences. Assessment was ongoing and again was both individual and group-oriented. Exhibit and performative arts based presentations of learning together with essays and individual reflective self-evaluation of learning formed the assessments within each course.

4.1.2 The Awards

The award of Graduate Diploma that was offered on successful completion of Years One and Two of the program, included course topics of art as experience, therapeutic relationships and group dynamics, concepts of therapeutic arts, qualitative research strategies, diversity in practice, and advanced arts therapy practices. It included the specific therapeutic arts modalities of visual art, music, drama, and storytelling. Students who exited the program with a Graduate Diploma often signalled their intention to return to their own professions (such as nursing and social work) and to use their newly acquired knowledge as an adjunct to their professional work. Some of those students re-enrolled after a year or two absence, to complete the Masters degree.

The degree of Master of Creative Arts Therapy was awarded to students who progressed from the Graduate Diploma to the successful completion of Year Three of the program. In this phase, the learning experiences consisted of supervised Practicum Field Placements that were augmented by studio workshops, plus completion of a Minor Research Project. It should be noted that the MCAT program deemed the Master degree as essential preparation for professional practice as a Creative Arts Therapist. (See Appendix 5 Program Outline and Appendix 8 Developmental Learning.)

4.1.3 Practicum Placements

The Practicum Placement was the most significant element of the student learning experience, in that it was the culmination of course learning applied to practice. Placements were undertaken in a variety of healthcare and education venues: hospitals, community care settings, and schools,

both mainstream and special needs. The clients and patients included children and adolescents, mothers and babies, adults and the aged. Students engaged with people of all ages and with a variety of difficulties and needs. Placement settings were in the community agencies, in hospitals and in schools; areas as palliative care, child and adolescent medicine, HIV-Aids, mental illness, learning difficulties, ADHD, domestic violence, refugees, physical rehabilitation – the list was almost infinite.

It is worth noting that in the early years of the MCAT program, very few community care agencies or institutions had knowledge, understanding or awareness of the field of creative arts therapy. Thus, when the first cohort of students sought to locate themselves in practicum placements, most of them had to begin by educating the public about their field and its place in the wider community. The notable exceptions to this were the Special Needs Schools who were pleased to have Creative Arts Therapy students on site whenever possible. Hence, it may be said that the MCAT program was at the forefront in providing, through its student practicum placements, an innovative therapeutic service to both healthcare and educational settings in Australia; its students and graduates broke considerable new ground in these areas.

4.2 Teaching Staff for the new MCAT program

A further reference to the Course Proposal Document April 1995 finds a statement of the expectations for teaching and the facilitation of learning.

3.1 The teaching of the program will be undertaken by academics from the Faculty of Biomedical and Health Sciences and Nursing whose specialty knowledge is in the field of Creative Arts Therapy. In addition, specialist practitioners will teach the therapeutic use of particular arts modalities, providing a rich source of knowledge from which the students can draw.. The respective knowledge and skills of the teaching staff provides an exciting blend of art forms, therapeutic practice and education which will address the needs of the practitioners in the field and is congruent with the mission of RMIT being in the forefront of professional education and training addressing ‘real world’ issues. Utilisation of the most appropriate resources will assist in maximising student learning opportunities.

Through the first three years of the program, the teaching staff consisted of a full-time program coordinator and two part time academic staff. In subsequent years, the numbers of academics staff increased, though university policy dictated that they could only ever employed on a casual or contractual basis. Per the Course Proposal Document, specialist practitioners taught the arts therapy courses (an Art Therapist to teach Art Therapy, a Music therapist to teach Music therapy, and so on). During the third year of the program’s operations some of the academic staff from

the Faculty of Nursing were called upon to supervise students completing their Minor Research Projects. These staff went on to provide some specific lectures and workshops within the program, and to serve on the Program Advisory Committee and the Higher Degree by Coursework Committee. By about the fourth and fifth years into the life of the program, several graduates who had completed their Master Degree in Creative Arts Therapy opted to return to the program as practicum supervisors and workshop facilitators. In my role as program Coordinator, I mentored these new teachers who, eventually, went on to supervise students minor research projects. A range of academic committees supported the work of the program. These included the Program Higher Degrees by Coursework Committee and a Program Advisory Committee.

4.2.1 The role of the Program Coordinator

The responsibilities of this position were various and multifaceted, and they included the following specifics: overseeing the selection and intake of new students, and monitoring their careers through to graduation, teaching into various courses and facilitating workshops and studios, liaising with community organisations as a precursor to setting up practicum placements for Year 3 students, overseeing the progress of, and supervising, students' minor research projects, mentoring new teaching staff, chairing or co-chairing program committees, maintaining membership on relevant university committees, initiating and authoring course amendments, and facilitating and contributing to the ongoing development of the program curriculum. Embedded in the foregoing was responsibility for the continuing assessment of learning and teaching processes and the amending of those processes as appropriate.

4.2.2 Learning Spaces – the Physical Landscape

The MCAT learning environment was comprised of Studio spaces in an old brick building, a Classroom in one of the large university buildings, and the Program Office located in an old Victorian terrace house. These venues were all were within a few minutes walk of each other on the downtown Melbourne campus of the university. Classes and workshops were scheduled on weekends.

The classroom, located on the fourth floor of an eight-story building was carpeted and furnished with the usual collection of tables and chairs. (I note the carpeting, as the program often fielded complaints from other academic staff about the art debris – small remnants of glitter or splashes of paint, which despite our best efforts, often remained embedded in the carpet after our weekend classes. Nonetheless, the program's expressed wish for a dedicated learning and teaching space

remained unfulfilled). The classroom was fitted with roller doors that allowed it to be opened out into a double-size room and extending it became part of the organizational start to each of our classes. Whiteboards were mounted at each end, bulletin boards were hung along one wall, and a large bank of windows along the fourth wall overlooked a terrace and gave the room a bright aspect. Our regular weekend schedule of classes meant that, for the most part, we had the building to ourselves. (The library one floor below was open each afternoon) Thus, classes and workshops often extended into smaller classrooms or into the hallways and stairwells and, in fine weather, onto an outdoor terrace at one end of the corridor. These expanding spaces were particularly relevant to the process of small-group learning that was a significant feature of the MCAT program.

The Studio was a low building located on a quiet side street, and down a short alley from the program office where all the art materials and musical instruments were stored. The main studio space was spacious and very light with skylights and large, north-facing windows. Typically, the floors were cement and a bank of sinks sat along one wall. Large, barn-like doors swung wide open onto the sidewalk, and a little park was directly adjacent to the building. Here too, learning activities often extended to the outside space when weather permitted. It was an environment that invited freedom of expression and experimentation and so, with few exceptions, both teachers and students preferred to meet and work in this space whenever possible. The Studio Workshops that augmented students' Practicum Placement learning in Year 3 were all held in this space. (The Fine Arts students for painting and printmaking used the Studio space on weekdays, so there were no lingering complaints from them about our leftovers.)

Presentations of learning were a regular feature of the course assignments, and the venues for these varied according to the student's or student group's choosing. Most were carried out in the classroom or the studio, but a few were done outdoors at local parks. The annual MCAT Colloquium, for which presentations were the central feature, was held in the small theatre or the auditorium located on the lower level of the classroom building.

4.2.3 Orientation to the Program

A regularly scheduled Program Orientation meeting marked the start of each academic year. It was held on the Friday evenings preceding the first weekend classes for Year 1 and Year 2 of the program. These meetings were scheduled to welcome new students to the Program and to welcome back returning students. At these meetings, each student was provided with a printed *Overview of Learning* containing information about the year's overarching focus of study, the

sorts of questions that would frame the learning, and brief outlines of the specific courses that were offered over the two semesters of study (see Appendix 9 and 10). Academic staff in attendance were those who would be teaching classes and/or facilitating workshops, myself as Program Coordinator and, when possible, a few students from Year 3 who could speak about their learning experiences in the foundation years (1 & 2) of the program.

The Year 3 Orientation to Practicum Placements and Minor Research Projects was necessarily more extensive, and intensive, and was therefore scheduled for a full Saturday at the first Studio Workshop of the academic year. Practicum Supervisors and workshop facilitators attended this meeting, again, with myself as Program Coordinator. Graduates of the program were invited and students affirmed the benefits of hearing about their experiences of Year 3, as well as the opportunity to allay anxieties through a time for questions.

4.3 The First Three Years of the MCAT program

Discussion of the MCAT program's learning and teaching must begin with a reiteration of its essential principle which was that all learning should have direct application to practice. This principle remained foremost and immutable throughout the life of the program.

A detailed outline of the original MCAT Curriculum was contained as an Addendum to the Course Proposal Document April 1995. Of interest to this narrative was Section 3.2 of the Document, which set out the aims of the program in the education of prospective creative arts therapists. It stated:

3.2 The students will have an opportunity to engage in experiential, process-oriented learning and that the multi-disciplinary nature of the course will provide a forum for exchange of knowledge, perceptions, values and understandings from the perspectives of the various disciplines represented in the program.

These principles were maintained as foundational. However, as we in the teaching staff expanded our knowledge and understanding of the field of creative arts therapy, the words, arts based were added to the phrase experiential, process-oriented learning.

The Addendum provided outlines of courses for individual specific arts therapy modalities and directed that the student would undertake specific studies in Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Drama Therapy and Dance-Movement Therapy. These would be followed by a course entitled Creative Arts Therapy that focused on the integration of the specialist courses. The Research course was initially set out to teach both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data. The remaining courses in the program, Therapeutic Relationships, Group Dynamics and Diverse Client Groups were set

out with a psychological-psychotherapy focus. The course in Practicum Placement was anchored in creative arts therapy practice and The Minor Research Project was planned as a traditional academic thesis.

4.3.1 Sense-making through a Psychodynamic Lens.

As noted elsewhere in this study, when the program was launched in July 1996, there was a limited body of literature on the broad subject of creative arts therapy, and what was available focused on practice in the field. The literature overview (Chapter 2) speaks of the lack of a text or set of guidelines about the teaching of creative arts therapy to prospective therapists.

Initially, the small cohort of MCAT teachers consisted of one academic colleague and me. We both came from educational and practice backgrounds in tertiary nursing education, mental health nursing and psychotherapy. Our orientation to teaching and learning, for both conceptual knowledge and practice, was grounded within those fields. The Course Planning document had indicated that this teaching cohort would be responsible for student learning around the subjects of therapeutic relationship, group dynamics and approaches to working with diverse groups of clients. Hence, during the first three years of the program's operation, the approach to learning was from a psychodynamic or an 'arts-in-psychotherapy' perspective. It was, and is, a particularly North American focus of learning and arts therapy practice, and reflected the lack of Australian resources.

Thus, it must be said that whilst we were excited by the possibilities of this new program, and intuitively knew that it was an opportunity to view the world anew, we had only our prior experiences to inform our teaching these creative arts therapy students. In hindsight, I believe that the strengths my colleague, Tony Welch, and I brought to the program proved invaluable to student learning. Both of us, as noted, came to the MCAT program with confident theoretical and practical perspectives from our mental health nursing and psychotherapy backgrounds, along with experience in teaching psychotherapeutic principles. At the time, this seemed to us an appropriate starting point for students who came with fine arts or teaching backgrounds, and whose prior knowledge about therapeutic constructs was minimal to non-existent.

Therefore, course content in the first three years of the program course was underpinned by psychological principles espoused in the works of Carl Rogers, D.W. Winnicott, and Ernesto Spinelli who write on individual psychotherapy, and of Irvin Yalom, the leading authority on group dynamics. These authors posit, in similar fashion, three essentials precepts: the primacy of the therapeutic relationship (regardless of what therapeutic strategies are employed), the essential

nature of therapist self-awareness, and an understanding of group process. Student learning was guided by these precepts and, it must be noted, subsequent program and course amendments did not alter the program's adherence to these basic premises. As a reflection of the psychodynamic orientation, the Year Two subject entitled *Diverse Client Groups* was designed to foster student exploration of various client groups within the field of mental health. It examined the psychosocial needs and difficulties of clients and patients of all ages, and how creative arts therapy might be of benefit to them, both in hospitals and in the community. The subject also allowed students to identify potential practicum placement venues, and as a logical follow-on, the Year 3 Practicum Placements were initially located within psychiatric and mental health venues – hospitals and community agencies that, despite a limited understanding of the field of creative arts therapy, agreed to have students working with their clients and client groups. The other popular choice of Practicum venue, the Special Needs School, was also approached as a constituent of the mental health field.

Thus, a mental health perspective prevailed until, in the third year of the program, one of the students arranged with the principal of a mainstream Melbourne primary school to undertake her practicum placement working with some of the children. This proved to be a circuit breaker to the accepted notion that practicum placements would all be located in mental health venues. It also signalled a shift to a wider spectrum of thought and practice, as I discuss later in this study.

4.3.2 Students and Student Cohorts

Students enrolled in the MCAT program came from various professional backgrounds and academic study experiences. As noted, the program was open to an eclectic array of applicants: some had prior education and training in fine arts and others had experience in healthcare, teaching or the various helping professions. Whilst undergraduate tertiary study was recommended, the program considered applicants who were without tertiary qualifications but who had a strong history of relevant life experience, and could demonstrate a potential for tertiary study. The application process included a personal interview for those who were shortlisted for entry to the program. This allowed the prospective students to ask questions about the program, as well as to respond to a set of prepared questions about how they anticipated the program. Applicants were, therefore, considered on individual merit, as well as being assessed according to the broad guidelines mandated by the Course Planning Document.

The yearly result of this application process was ongoing diversity within the student body that influenced the shaping and reshaping of the MCAT program over its lifetime. It engendered and

fostered the expression of varying perspectives on the arts and their place in society, which, in turn, tended to underscore the program's openness to multiple and conflicting viewpoints and to the myriad creative ways of expressing such views as part of the learning, in classes and workshops. It must be said that the common goal of learning to become a creative arts therapist provided students with a platform for the many propositions of what that actually meant and how it could be achieved.

A delineation of MCAT student cohorts was a dynamic that first became apparent at about the three-year mark in the life of the program. It was then seen to emerge each year at around the end of the first semester, at which point students seemed to coalesce into three loosely identifiable cohorts. The teaching staff began to recognise these cohorts by their sets of expressed views about the program. These views were particularly related to how the learning matched expectations, and the general level of comfort with course content and approaches to teaching. It was particularly noticeable regarding students' responses to the program's embrace of arts based learning and around the place of the arts in the practice of creative arts therapy.

I should note here that, in my experience, new and formalised learning situations often engender a degree of discomfort among students. Where people find themselves among strangers in a classroom or a course, it's not surprising to observe a kind of gravitational pull toward others of like mind and experience. Such was the case among students beginning the MCAT program. For the purposes of this research, it seems worth discussing the processes and the forms that this dynamic took, for not only did it pose challenges for teaching and learning, it offered unexpected opportunities for the area of program and curriculum development. The following discussion enlarges on the identities of these student cohorts.

Group One – the Artists The students who came into the program as artists or with a background in fine arts, formed a group whose express goals were to discover how their chosen art form could be used in therapy (later the language changed to as therapy) and how they might make the 'leap' from artist to arts therapist. These students were comfortable with arts based learning and, as illustrated in this text, they contributed to its enhancement within the program. It is particularly notable that students in this group were generally the first to integrate creative arts therapy theories with practice issues and, in the main, to be comfortable and enthusiastic within their practicum placement learning experiences.

Group Two - the Teachers A second identifiable group was made up of those students who were mostly teachers, (some but not all were arts teachers) and for them the initial learning goals

were expressed as the wish to understand the conceptual meaning of creative arts therapy, and to grasp the techniques for *doing it*. This group of students tended to embrace the varied theories of the arts therapies, but were rather more wary of the inherent uncertainties of arts therapy practice. The reaction of this group to arts based learning was mostly quite positive, but again, these students often struggled with the ambiguous nature of hands-on creative processes and their attendant materials. Many in this cohort chose to exit on completion of the Graduate Diploma. Some later re-enrolled to complete the Master degree, having had time to reflect and, notably as they reported, after having explored and extended their own hands-on learning of an art form.

Group Three - the Therapists A third group consisted of those who came to the program from work in the social services or healthcare professions. Their perceived and expressed need was to integrate creative arts therapy practices into their current (or prior) practice, initially seeing creative arts therapy as an adjunct to social work, nursing or psychology. These students often showed a marked trepidation around active engagement with the arts; many found the arts based learning with its concomitant hands-on creative processes as quite confronting. Many in this cohort had difficulty integrating the arts with their ideas of what constituted therapy and therapeutic relationships. They were uneasy imagining themselves as artists, and most admitted to not having had a direct personal experience with art. Perhaps, not surprisingly, they were the most resistant to accepting the concept that ‘art is therapy.’ It was this group that, each year, were quite vocal in their push for greater inclusion of psychotherapy literature and counselling practices in the MCAT coursework, and it was this group that required the most support and guidance in making the leap of learning from psychotherapy to arts therapy. A feature of the support offered by the teaching staff was to encourage each student to find or make a studio space wherein they could actively engage in their own creative process, and if possible, become a student of their preferred art form.

In what may be seen as paradoxical, this cohort’s expressed desire for more psychotherapy content, (a desire that surfaced without fail, each year) became one factor that led to a shift in the learning focus of the MCAT program. For it required not only the clear articulation of a more definitive arts based philosophy of learning, but the actions that would amend courses and course content to reflect this shift.

In their own ways, each of these student cohorts made important contributions to the ongoing development of the program, and to our approach to learning and teaching. Thus, this mix of

student outlooks and desires provided fertile learning and teaching ground, especially when taken together with the ideas, goals and diverse backgrounds of those of us who were the teachers, supervisors, and workshop facilitators.

4.3.3 Restructuring the Arts Modalities - the first Curriculum Amendment

The first tangible change to the program occurred through a restructuring of the Arts Modality courses. Following their studies in Therapeutic Relationships and Group Dynamics the first cohort of students moved to the Arts Therapy courses which were offered as specific modalities. Art Therapy and Music Therapy were scheduled for Year 1, and Drama Therapy and Dance Movement Therapy for Year 2. These courses were designed to be taught by specialist arts therapy practitioners employed for that purpose alone. In fairly short order, difficulties ensued with this arrangement as some of the specialists began to espouse negative views about the MCAT program. For example, students were advised that it was unlikely they would be able to practice credibly or constructively as arts therapy professionals because they would lack the necessary *specialist* knowledge and skills. Furthermore, that Creative Arts Therapy as a field lacked credibility in the wider community. Not surprisingly, these negative comments resulted in students feeling undermined and with a rising sense of doubt about the value and worthiness of their study in the MCAT program.

The notable exceptions to all of this were the Dramatherapy specialists who were enthusiastically committed to the MCAT program and its aims. My response to the students' concerns was to move a change to the structure of the curriculum. With the assistance of my small teaching cohort, and the approval of the Program Advisory Committee (and ultimately the relevant University Committees) the specialist arts therapy modalities were amended to become two integrated courses.

The modalities of Art Therapy and Music Therapy were combined into a course entitled Creative Arts Modality 1, subtitled the therapeutic uses of Visual Art & Music and was offered in the second semester of Year 1 of the program. With the assistance of the dramatherapists, the modality of Drama Therapy was combined with Storytelling to form the course, Creative Arts Modality 2: the therapeutic uses of Drama and Storytelling, and was offered in semester 1 of Year 2 of the program. The modality of Dance–Movement Therapy was dropped altogether, as a separate program of Dance therapy study had been set up within the University.

Consultation with the specialist therapists about the negative student feedback, resulted in revised attitudes toward the MCAT program, and most continued to teach their specialty for just a couple more years. As soon as graduates of the MCAT program became available to facilitate workshops in these courses, they were employed to do so. The Dramatherapists continued to teach in the program through to its close, expanding their availability to supervising both the practicum placements and minor research projects. These amendments reflected a dedicated creative arts therapy perspective.

This first major change to the curriculum also resulted in the institution of a formalised student response process. A Course Evaluation and Learning Log form (see Appendix 7) was developed and provided to students at the end of each course within the Program. They were free to hand it back anonymously and they were asked to provide an evaluation of their learning experiences in the course. In hindsight, I now see that a similar evaluation form, with an expanded focus on the Graduate Diploma or the Masters experience, was something that should have been provided when students graduated from the program.

4.3.4 Redesigning the Clinical Project to establish a Minor Research Project

The next substantive change in these early years of the program was made to the Masters thesis. It had originally been embedded, along with the Practicum Placement segment of learning into a course entitled The Clinical Project, with the thesis component set out as a standard academic thesis of 14-20,000 words. In the process of supervising the first cohort of students, it became apparent that this structure failed to take into account the creative arts therapy knowledge and skills that students had studied and appropriated in preparation for their professional practices as creative arts therapists.

In our supervision of these students, we had begun by emphasising the fundamental goal of qualitative research methods, those paradigms that seek to uncover and illuminate what things mean to people. The first cohort of MCAT research theses focused on examining motives for creative work through interviewing artists and other client groups. Thus, the student researcher was forced to examine the arts process through behavioural science research methods, using protocols which, in the words of dramatherapist, Bernie Warren, “have been, established, defined and calibrated in terms of other bodies of knowledge.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Warren, 5.

This paradigm of a traditional academic thesis proved both aesthetically insufficient and frustrating for the MCAT students. They expressed dismay at the apparent lack of understanding accorded them by university committees (HDCC, Ethics) about what their various research projects were trying to achieve, and annoyance with the program for failing to recognise the importance of allowing them to make the experience of creative arts therapy the central focus of their research. Add to that the program's conundrum as it faced the need to accommodate the research proposals of those students whose expressive strengths were through the art of image-making or music, for example, rather simply than as wordsmiths.

The difficulties involved in trying to incorporate an arts based component into a standard thesis proved more troublesome than anyone could have foreseen. Although we had yet to discover the emerging literature on arts based research we, again, viewed the students' claims as sensible and legitimate. Furthermore, we realised that the premises guiding our curriculum for the preceding two and a half years were linked to the research project. Therefore, it was acknowledged that the students must be accorded greater scope for an arts based research approach. The decision was made to amend the MCAT Minor Research Project.

I would note here, that our amending processes were greatly assisted and influenced by the works of writers in the field of creative arts therapy who were exploring and enlarging the genre of arts based research for the arts therapies. Among these were dramatherapists Roger Grainger, Phil Jones and Robert Landy, art therapists Frances Kaplan and Sean McNiff, and music therapist Helen Payne. These authors write from both academic and arts therapy practice perspectives, and their ideas about arts therapy research provided relevance to the field of creative arts therapy as well as a degree of academic legitimacy. For the student arts based researcher, the works of these writers helped to militate against a potential trepidation at the act of stepping outside the bounds of established research practices. The following quote by Roger Grainger encapsulates some of our thinking at the time:

Art-based research could be called creativity or creation research. Because of its unwillingness to translate the language of artistic experience into any other kind of code claiming that the loss of meaning involved in doing this actually destroys the whole purpose of research, art-based research explores experiential transformations without quantifying them. In this sense it is a work of art in itself.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Roger Grainger, *Researching the Arts Therapies: A Dramatherapist's Perspective* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 1999), 141.

Indeed, it was this first cohort of MCAT students who objected to having to translate their arts based learning and practice experiences into what Grainger notes (in the above quote), as “any other kind of code.” Their resistance opened a space for the program to embrace new and different ways to approach this segment of the learning.

Taking all of these factors into account, the Higher Degrees by Coursework Committee, amended the thesis component. It became The Minor Research Project, a specific self-contained course and process with a set of guidelines. This new course gave students a choice of structure; it could take the form of an arts based research project or it could be constructed as a standard academic thesis, or it could be made as some combination of the two. This allowed the student to opt for one of three minor Project formats. In the ensuing years, the MCAT-HDCC continued to search out and embrace research paradigms that resonated both with artistic process and academic rigour.

Setting out guidelines for developing the research proposal, and instituting a research proposal seminar, helped the program to expand ways of approaching the research process, as well as giving students the option to place their art form as the central focus of the research. Some students chose to include their art as an adjunct that supported, enhanced, represented, or otherwise gave meaning to it. From the time that this course amendment was approved, we found that students increasingly moved toward arts based methods of investigating their research question. More often than not, they approached it through a process of making art and then examining their relationships to their work, taking account of what the creative process, and its product, had revealed about the research question. As a supervisor, I found that their work honoured the notion of 'researcher as researched' and, in many instances, they showed great courage in what they were willing to reveal about themselves within their research projects. Examples of these minor research projects have been included in The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5).

I saw this development of the Minor Research Project as a major initiative that reflected a bit of my own creative processes within the MCAT program. My journal reflections from that time include the following observation:

The inclusion of arts-based research methods has been, if not revolutionary, certainly akin to painting colour onto a white page, or filling a silent space with music. We, the

students and supervisors, began, in the words of Bob Landy “To use a language spoken by those in the act of making art for the purpose of making meaning.”¹⁷⁶

Therefore, within three years of the MCAT program getting underway, there began to emerge a sense of exciting possibilities for this program, ones that included ideas for an enhanced form of creative arts therapy and of therapeutic relationships that were unequivocally arts informed and arts based. These are discussed in the following section. Subsequent minor changes included the renaming of courses, to foreground an arts based learning focus. So for example, the course, Therapeutic Relationships was renamed The Arts-Therapeutic Relationship; Diverse Client Groups became Diversity in Arts Therapy Practice.

4.3.5 Additional voices: the Higher Degree by Coursework Committee

The fifth year out from the launch of the program, saw an expansion of both the membership and the work of the MCAT Higher Degrees by Coursework Committee (HDCC). A few of the new part time teaching staff were invited to serve on this Committee as were interested academic staff from the faculties of Nursing and Education. These new voices spoke of new ideas, primarily about the Minor Research Project for which the HDCC was especially concerned and responsible, but also about related course such as the Research courses, which were amended to become one course in Qualitative Research with an arts based research focus. The Committee became more active as a resource to students as each one endeavoured to design a minor research project that would be manageable by virtue of its scope and limits of time. Committee members were able to express an interest in, and then take on, supervisory roles with students in their final projects. This expanded Committee with its enhanced purview imbued the overall MCAT program with a combined air of enthusiasm and grounding.

4.4 Act II We Made the Road by Walking: a creative path to Arts Based Learning

These initial program changes foreshadowed the evolution of the program into one with the encompassed a comprehensive arts based learning approach. As the program coordinator, I was responsible for fostering, initiating and supporting that movement. That said, there were multiple encounters and resources that influenced the pedagogical decisions. The move to a dedicated art based focus of learning involved a convergence of ideas among the teachers that affected both the approaches to learning and teaching and to course content. Made within a collaborative process, we realised that we were talking about arts based learning before we had fully identified it as such.

¹⁷⁶ Landy, 43.

Dialogues with students undertaking arts focused minor research projects helped all who were involved to understand the concept of art as knowledge and to see how related ideas could be made tangible in the activities of learning and teaching. The varied learning needs of students from diverse educational and vocational backgrounds experience were also a mediating force in the evolving MCAT program. We needed to respond to students who had strong arts backgrounds but little or no experiences in a professional helping relationship and, conversely, to students with strengths in the latter but little or none in the former, as well as those who were somewhere in between. I think it is safe to say that each and all of these collaborative efforts constituted a creative process in which art was a metaphor; think a blank canvas or stage, or a lump of clay.

In hindsight, I saw the lack of a specific teaching text for creative arts therapy as something of a boon. My search to understand how we could best teach for the field lead me to read widely on the arts therapies and, as noted, to engage in dialogues with colleagues and returning graduates. We paid close attention to student feedback about their learning experiences and their detailed comments that were submitted on the Course Evaluation and Learning Logs (See Appendix 7).

Within these developmental processes, I often thought of a book title, *We Make the Road by Walking* (the collected conversations between Miles Horton and Paulo Friere¹⁷⁷ about their educational ideas and practices) which seemed an apropos subtitle for our processes as we endeavoured to develop learning and teaching approaches in the MCAT program. For, the teachers (and students) did indeed make the program's metaphorical 'road' by walking it. Similarly, Sumara writes about a philosophy of *currere*, which acknowledges curriculum as "a path that is laid down while walking"¹⁷⁸ and which bends, turns and winds according to how relationships between students, teachers, texts and contexts ensue.

As I reflected on our teaching experiences, I was struck by the fact that whilst we were carving out a learning pathway without a map, it never occurred to us to be daunted or deterred. Perhaps that was because it was only in hindsight that we became fully aware of the extent of the process. Greene writes of "the experience of beginnings" wherein persons find themselves as "the authors of what they are doing or intending to do"¹⁷⁹ and she quotes Hannah Arendt who wrote, "It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever

¹⁷⁷ Miles Horton and Paulo Friere, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

¹⁷⁸ Dita Sumara, *Private readings in public: Schooling the literary imagination*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 175.

¹⁷⁹ Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 21.

may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings.”¹⁸⁰ These words from Greene and Arendt seem to capture some of the essence of the unfolding processes in the MCAT program.

As noted in the earlier part of this discussion, there were several events and experiences of what might fit Arendt’s term of, ‘startling unexpectedness’ that led to a reshaping of the curriculum and an enhanced approach to learning and teaching. These beginnings converged with what may be construed as other ‘agents of change’ that included the following: a burgeoning arts therapy practice literature, my informed wish to move the focus of the program’s approach to learning to one that was more arts based, the return of some of the first MCAT graduates into teaching and facilitation roles within the program, and an articulation of educational values. The next section looks briefly at each of these.

4.4.1 A Literature for Arts Therapy Practices

A burgeoning arts therapy literature, (together with a list of relevant works that had originated as references in the minor research projects of the first and second student groups to undertake the Masters degree), were significant contributions to the change processes that were beginning to take shape within the program. The arts therapy literature was both broad and specific in its scope, and complimented the earlier works of authors such as art psychologist, Rudolph Arnheim, and arts educationers, Elliot Eisner, and Maxine Greene.

My ongoing encounters with the texts of specialist arts therapy practitioners were enriching and informative. The work of dramatherapists, Bob Landy, Sue Jennings Martina Jenkyns, Phil Jones and Bernie Warren, together with the texts by art therapists, Mala Betensky, Edith Kramer, Martina Thomson, and play therapist, Ann Cattanach were particularly helpful in constructing learning experiences that emulated arts therapy practices. In addition, the storytelling work of Jack Zipes that I had discovered some years earlier, led me to read Gianni Rodari whose work with children also informed students practicum learning experiences. I returned to author Robert Coles whose text, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* was the inspiration for my MA thesis. I included it in my work with MCAT students as I helped them to conceptualise meanings of therapeutic relationships that were not predicated simply on a set of proscribed theories. All of these works expanded our perspectives in considering ways of thinking about of arts based learning. In the overall context of the program, these works were a

¹⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (London: Viking Penguin, 1961), 169 in Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 21.

welcome addition to the texts that were already in use and, as time went on and courses were amended, these works expanded the list of titles on the original lists of assigned readings.

In concert with this ever-expanding genre of arts therapy literature, my discovery of the works of (visual) art therapist and author, Edith Kramer represented a professional turning point and guided me in furthering the movement for change in the MCAT program. Her writing assisted me to articulate and draft a more comprehensive program philosophy and, in a broad sense, contributed to the process of amending courses and the overall approach to learning. Pre-eminent in her field of art therapy, Kramer's work is firmly grounded in the idea (and practice) of 'art as therapy.' Kramer writes extensively and forcefully about the need for art therapists to make a firm commitment to this idea. The following statement is a sample of her views:

No more than others can the art therapist successfully deal with two masters. Certainly she must deal with words and with all the complexities of human interaction, but if her interest in the process of psychoanalysis or other primarily verbal therapies comes to outweigh her passion for therapy-through-art she will do well to change her profession.¹⁸¹

Underscoring Kramer's position, art therapist Frances Kaplan states that, "Art therapy's greatest power resides in using art as therapy. This power, however, does not originate in psychoanalytic concepts nor in the concepts of any other current psychotherapeutic theory. It originates in the nature of art itself."¹⁸²

As well as informing our course amendment deliberations, these texts provided me with a necessary certainty about the direction the MCAT learning should take. They also helped me to respond definitively to that student cohort, identified earlier in this text as Group Three, who expressed a desire for, and in some cases, demanded, an increased focus on theories and practices of psychotherapy in the MCAT curriculum.

4.4.2 MCAT graduates as teachers in the program

The first graduates who joined the part time teaching and practicum supervisory staff were part of the core group of artists, described above as Group One, who had been quick to grasp the essence of creative arts therapy through their positive learning experiences in practicum placements. Moreover, many of them were part of the group who had pushed to have the Minor Research Project amended to include more arts based possibilities within the research approach. Thus, they were graduates who as students had already begun to envision different ways of

¹⁸¹ Edith Kramer, *Art as Therapy: Collected Papers* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 1988), 34.

¹⁸² Frances Kaplan, *Art, Science and Art Therapy: Repainting the Picture* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 2000), 103.

presenting the creative arts therapy learning. As the program coordinator, I recall my conversations with these new graduates as mutually informative, stimulating and marking an informal part of the change process. Ultimately, these new teachers were to provide some dynamic workshops for the MCAT students. As discussed in The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5) the learning events that transpired would add scope both to later learning and to subsequent practicum and research projects.

4.5 Learning and Teaching Creative Arts Therapy

The student learning processes were encouraged and fostered by a dedicated cohort of teachers, facilitators and supervisors whose approach to teaching reflected both their own style and learning values and shared values about anchoring the concept of *art as therapy*. All agreed that arts based learning mirrored arts based therapy practices. Hence, whilst almost all the teaching staff was present on a contract basis, their commitment to the program's philosophy of learning was both firm and generous. The truth of this commitment was evident in the creative, imaginative and rigorous learning formats that they offered to students. Working both individually and collaboratively, the expressive and didactic forms of their teaching and facilitation gave students a rich array of learning experiences. Midway through the program, we developed a standardized Template for classes and workshops so that students could expect a degree of certainty and become familiar with how the learning would be offered, even whilst taking advantage of each facilitator's unique style, expertise and experience.

As a group, we continued to 'make the road by walking' guided by some of the ideas of scholars who write on learning and teaching in higher education. Among them was Ramsden who states that,

Learning... should be about changing the ways in which learners understand, or experience, or conceptualise the world around them. Therefore the vital competencies in academic disciplines consist in *understanding* [that is] the way in which students apprehend and discern phenomena related to the subject, rather than what they know about them.¹⁸³

Ramsden also notes that, "The concept of approach [to learning] describes a qualitative aspect of learning. It is about how people experience and organise the subject matter of a learning task."¹⁸⁴ We were also influenced by the work of David Boud et al.¹⁸⁵ on experiential learning,

¹⁸³ Paul Ramsden, *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 4

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 5.

¹⁸⁵ David Boud, Ruth Cohen and David Walker, eds., *Using experience for learning* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1993).

and of Robin Usher who frames his writing on the subject with the question of whether experiential learning makes a difference. Usher constitutes experience as knowledge and states that, "The meaning of experience depends on an interpretive process."¹⁸⁶

In many ways the works of these scholars affirmed our collective approach to MCAT learning as well as informing the curricular amendments that we subsequently instituted. Arts based learning and experiential learning became of a piece in the classes and workshops that were offered to the students. Ongoing deliberations focused on what ideas were seen as important for transmission to students and how this could be accomplished.

4.6 Arts Based Student Learning

As the program adapted an arts based educational focus, several premises related to the practice of creative arts therapy came to underpin the approach to learning, together with some by which students might evaluate their learning. Through their own direct experience, students were led to consider how engaging with the arts can engender transformative experiences. This idea is fundamental to all fields of the arts therapies which sees that for people of all ages such engagement offers the potential for wellness, rehabilitation and palliation, as well as for learning. A relevant definition of the word 'transformative' is provided by the dramatherapist, David Read Johnston who defines it as, "The flexible alteration of self in response to the ever-changing world about one."¹⁸⁷ MCAT course content and learning experiences were therefore aimed at assisting the student to understand the contributions that engagement with the arts can make to individuals, to groups and to communities. How in learning, as in therapy, the arts may provide pathways to knowledge. In keeping with the notion of transformation is the importance of play and humour as factors that release the imagination where imagination is key in creative arts therapy.

McNiff refers to this as "the medicine of the mediums"¹⁸⁸ and Arnheim describes "the life-giving energies"¹⁸⁹ found in association with viewing art. These ideas directed the student toward personal experimentation with art forms as a means of understanding the effects of involvement in creative processes. Ultimately, their understanding would be taken into their practicum learning experiences. An overarching question of note posed to students throughout all areas of

¹⁸⁶ Robin Usher, *Experiential Learning or Learning from Experience: Does it Make a Difference?* in David Boud et al, *Using experience for learning* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1993). 170.

¹⁸⁷ David Read Johnston in Landy, *Essays in Dramatherapy*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ Sean McNiff, *Art-Based Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher, 1998).

¹⁸⁹ Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).

study was one that asked, “How do the arts enhance and foster wellness, thus (potentially) expanding our capacity to think, act and imagine?” Students were further guided toward understandings of context; the importance of seeing all persons (self and other) within situational contexts, leading to an appreciation for the stories we tell and the images we choose, in our attempts to make sense of our lives.

4.7 Educational Values

The MCAT program offered students the proposition that questions are potentially more interesting, and enhancing to learning, than answers. Hence, a learning query, repeatedly posed to students was, “What questions has this experience raised for you?” Students were asked to reflect and to respond in various ways – cognitively, creatively, sensorial and didactically. Thus, from the outset, the MCAT program enjoined students to consider that in the world of therapy, as in the world of art, there is rarely if ever, one single correct perspective. Spinelli’s concept of ‘un-knowing’¹⁹⁰ (hyphen used by the author) framed the idea that theories of therapy are simply ideas, and when looked at across the spectrum of possibilities they are sometimes complimentary, often contradictory and probably least helpful when any single one purports to hold the ultimate truth.

Students were encouraged to contemplate the idea that one element in the power of art lies with its capacity for possibility and potential. Indeed, students might be invited to explore, in real time, how that by simply shifting an angle of vision, adding a colour or a line, changing the musical key or rhythm, or the intonation in a dialogue, the world and one’s perspective of it may be altered, subtly or significantly. The learning emphasised the power of art, to release the imagination, and effect change, both in learning and in therapy. Therefore, art as therapy.

Learning in the MCAT program was as presented as an offer, which invites rather than demands participation. Invitations to participate in the learning processes were meant to reflect the way that, in professional arts therapy practice, the therapist would expect to invite the client to engage with materials, thus offering therapeutic experiences rather than directing each moment of them.

Personal reflection was an important part of the learning process (see Appendix 11 Suggestions for Readings & Keeping a Journal). It was a process that the MCAT program deemed as an essential component of work within a therapeutic construct and was, therefore, a n ongoing feature of the students’ learning. It was predicated on Schon’s ideas of the reflective

¹⁹⁰ Spinelli, *Tales of Unknowing*.

practitioner.¹⁹¹ Reflection was, for some students, a new experience and in the beginning, they often identified it as a difficult process. One method of helping students to develop their reflective skills was by assigning them to write about self-as-learner in the third person, as if they were watching themselves from a slight distance. From initially positing descriptions of their learning events, students moved to reflect on the meanings of those events and their interpretations of their part in the event. The notion of storying as reflection was appealing to many students, helping them move toward a stance of reflective practitioner.

4.7.1 Learning for practice

The arts therapy practice texts generally agree that following points are central to effective practice, and so these were incorporated into the MCAT approach to learning as achievable student learning aims. They include achieving an empathetic understanding of clients and patients; understanding the arts as therapeutic and the processes that make them so; developing a sense of self as artist by engaging in a creative process; developing an identity as therapist that included roles as witness and as guide.

In a broad-brush approach, the MCAT program encouraged students to eschew rigid notions of ‘techniques for applying a set of therapeutic strategies’ in favour of adopting a flexible approach to practice anchored by ideas that included:

- Art as therapy
- Trusting the process within therapeutic ambiguity
- Imagination and improvisation as therapeutic constructs,
- Therapeutic collaboration and offers,
- Un-knowing and discovery as therapeutic process and outcome
- The arts as containers for risk and change

The MCAT program proposed to assist students to achieve their individual understandings of these aspects through facilitated arts based learning in classes and workshops. The program did not advocate one correct way to comprehend these concepts or any single strategy to apply them in practice. The framework for learning and teaching was one of facilitated learning which places the teacher as a knowledgeable guide. In an earlier work on facilitation of learning, I wrote that, “The essence of facilitation (of any group or situation) is to create an environment in which the participants are free to define and advance their own learning goals, using their own creative

¹⁹¹ Donald Schon, *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991).

energy to acquire whatever resources are deemed necessary.”¹⁹² Many of the student experiences of this learning framework emerge in the imaginary conversations and learning vignettes contained in The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5).

Rodari posits a view of the teacher as “animator,”¹⁹³ a description that the MCAT teachers readily embraced for its denotation of movement and dynamism in learning. I refer again to Usher who writes about experiential learning and observes that, “Language in its descriptive mode inclines us to look through the words to the things beyond words. But, language in its performative mode creates rather than describes.”¹⁹⁴ Usher’s point would seem to extend that of Rodari, and both points are important for their relevance to MCAT learning process, as *performance*, in various guises, was an essential element of it. Those guises were, at times, the spontaneous outcome of classroom learning, whilst at others they were preplanned as part of student assessments and were presented individually or in small groups. (see Appendix 12 A Sample Learning Assessment) Sometimes performance was as an investigation of practicum experiences, sometimes performance was a planned incorporation of the conceptual learning that was scheduled for a particular course workshop. On occasion, performance originated with, and was modeled by the teacher. From the program’s beginnings, the element of performance was built into all assessments. It was this pervasive aspect of performance that led me to think of rehearsal, improvisation and storytelling, as metaphors for the MCAT learning process.

In keeping with this discussion, I was interested to read Westwood’s comparative study of art therapy education in Australia, in which she quotes Dr. Sheridan Linnell on a facet of educational practice in the University of Western Sydney’s art therapy program. Linnell’s description is notable for its parallel to the MCAT approach to learning:

We increasingly brought art practice into every dimension of teaching...so the dimensions of performance and visuality; music and dance; installations were all coming into transform the traditional seminar presentations to something that was much more like performance art...and we started to think about the metaphor of the installation and performance as guiding metaphors for the training we were offering. (Linnell, 2008)¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Gerry Katz. “Facilitaion” in Christine Alavi ed. Problem-based learning in a Health Sciences Curriculum (London: Routledge, 1995) 53, 55.

¹⁹³ Rodari, 121.

¹⁹⁴ Usher quoted in Boud, 179.

¹⁹⁵ Sherridan Linell (2008) in Jill Westwood, Hybrid Creatures: Mapping the emerging shape of art therapy education in Australia. Unpublished PhD Thesis. (Sydney: University of Western Sydney, 2010)

The main difference between this educational picture and the one depicting the MCAT program is, as I mentioned above, that these modes were a learning feature from the beginning, such that performance as a component of the learning was almost taken for granted as a feature of the learning. However, and importantly, it was only with the shift to an arts based focus that we, the teachers, began to contextualise this segment of learning, articulating its purpose and thus interpreting each learning performance as a reflection of creative arts therapy practice.

4.8 Learning through Storytelling

My process of reflective research for this inquiry has confirmed for me that a significant feature of the MCAT education process was the use of storytelling. It could be said that storytelling in one form or another was a central feature in the education of MCAT students. In some instances, the story was simply one with a beginning, middle and end; this happened, then this, and then that. In others, the additional task of the story was an analysis of the learning that had occurred.

Storytelling appeared in the following ways:

- Arts based representations of the student's learning, both in classes and workshops, and in the peer presentations that were a feature of each course assignment. Using a chosen arts modality or combination of modalities, students presented a representation of their learning that was, primarily, a non-verbal story.
- The storying of a student's learning in a short descriptive essay in which the student was asked to write about his or her experiences in a third-person format.
- The Practicum Placement reports in which the student related the story of her placement experiences with clients followed by an analysis of those experiences in terms of the learning that occurred.
- Imaginative literature (novels, short stories, drama and poetry) was included in the lists of required and recommended readings for the MCAT courses, with discussion of their relevance to understanding therapeutic relationships.

These processes of storytelling mirrored and reflected the processes of therapy in which the client is offered time, place and materials for telling his or her story. It takes account of the possibility that such telling is indeed not telling, wherein engaging with the arts allows one to bracket the world and momentarily retreat from real-life, until a feeling of safety has been established. It accords that, initially at least, it is not possible for one to make an oral articulation of the story, and so art forms such as drawing or music making or drama are representational alternatives. It may be that physical impairment impedes the telling of one's story, and an expressive mode opens an alternative pathway.

My reflections on the importance of storytelling and of attending to one another, took me, again, to Coles' text with its accounts of his medical rounds in the poor, working class New Jersey (USA) neighbourhoods with the poet doctor, William Carlos Williams. I never cease to be moved by reading them, and one particular account always stands out for me. Coles relates a conversation with Williams who says to him,

We have to pay the closest attention to what we say. What the patients say tells us what to think about what hurts them and what we say tells us what is happening to us – what we are thinking and what may be wrong with us. A pause and then another jab at my murky mind: Their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.¹⁹⁶

In my work with MCAT students, I was at pains to draw their attention to this passage and to reflect, carefully, on its implications.

4.9 Act III In the End – How the Program looked and sounded

The university's decision to close the MCAT program was unexpected and, as it was based on fiscal considerations, was presented as nonnegotiable. To those participating in the program it was received with surprise and dismay. The program had achieved recognition in the Melbourne community as a centre of excellent learning, whilst its graduates were providing services to the community through new and different approaches. As an academic program it had become known in the Australian arts therapy field as one whose educational focus was centred on art as therapy.

Westwood's study of arts therapy education in Australia, posited the RMIT-MCAT program as follows:

What stood out is the attention and emphasis given to pedagogy, particularly the emphasis on arts-based learning processes and the various teaching and learning frameworks that were used in the education. This program was developed from a process of discovery and exploration strongly grounded on these creative and problem-based, collaborative learning frameworks. Another distinguishing feature is the emphasis on the arts process itself. This is somewhat in contrast to the other masters programs that give equal or more weight to psychotherapeutic studies. Grounding the education in the arts processes could be regarded as inspired and this emphasis on pedagogy and arts brings these areas to special attention.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories*, 30.

¹⁹⁷ Westwood, 174.

The educational focus of the MCAT program embraced the idea that engagement in and with the arts could engender participants with a sense of empowerment. Eschewing medical definitions of ‘therapy’ the program adopted ideas around therapy-as-learning with the holistic goal of well being for individuals, families and communities. The word ‘therapy’ was contextualised as the ‘therapeutic use of creative arts forms’ which allowed both a conceptual and practical interweave of the discipline areas of education, health, and the arts. (See Appendix 6 A Philosophy of Learning and Teaching.)

From its origins within the Course Proposal document, the MCAT curriculum was informed and framed by some epistemological assumptions: the therapeutic legitimacy of artistic activity; engagement with a creative process is educative, healing, and health-promoting for individuals, groups, and communities; art is a method of widening the range of human experiences by creating equivalencies for such experiences; art has the power to evoke genuine emotions.

The program saw the guidance aspect of the teaching-learning relationship as a reflection of the therapeutic relationship, the one informing the other in a circular rather than linear fashion. It placed prime value on active, experiential learning, seeing this as one essential means of understanding the ways that human beings of whatever age endeavour to comprehend themselves in their world. Approaches to learning were embedded within a perspective that emphasised the capacity of the arts to create, enhance and support opportunities for existential change. On his work in the field, Grainger notes that, “Artistic medium are seen as a kind of laboratory for working in, and working through alternative ways of being in the world.”¹⁹⁸ That idea translates from learning about creative arts therapy to the clinical application of creative arts therapy.

4.9.1 Learning and Teaching Models from Boud and Bruffee

Among the important developments in the MCAT curriculum was the implementation of two particular learning-teaching paradigms. One was the conceptualising of creative arts therapy as ‘an offer’ and the other was a collaborative and cooperative learning model based on the work of Bruffe. In the first paradigm, we adapted Boud’s model of experiential learning as a way to configure creative arts therapy constructs. Boud posits three stages of reflective learning activities, as follows: (i.) preparation for experiential events, where it is important to focus on the learner, the learning milieu, and the skills and strategies employed in reflection; (ii.) reflection during an experiential activity, with phases of noticing and intervening; and (iii.) reflection after

¹⁹⁸ Grainger, 91.

the event, involving the individual learner returning to the experience through reflecting on thoughts and feelings that may have occurred, and re-evaluating the experience.¹⁹⁹ (See Learning Vignette VII in Chapter 5) I see Boud's model as quite similar to Abbs²⁰⁰ 'four phase' model of making, presenting, responding and evaluating learning then beginning the process all over again. One consistent feature is the central place of reflective learning and reflective practice. In the second of the learning paradigms, we instituted Bruffee's model of Collaborative Learning of which the author states:

Learning (anything) is not an individual process, but a social interdependent one, and it occurs on an axis not drawn between individuals and things but among people. We learn best in groups because we tend to talk each other out of unshared biases and presuppositions. Although we learn a lot from what we read, we learn a lot more from what we say to each other about what we read. As a group, we distribute knowledge and authority among ourselves.²⁰¹

The impetus to incorporate Bruffee's model into the MCAT learning and teaching framework arose from my accidental discovery of his text and seeing that its ideas of cooperative and collaborative learning processes had great symmetry with the egalitarian approaches to creative arts therapy practices that we were proposing to students. (See Appendix 10 for detailed Outline)

Looking back over the life of the MCAT program, it is possible to see it as a creative work-in-progress. And, as with all creative works, it began with an image, an idea, some materials, a space, a few like-minded people, *and* sixteen very excited prospective students. One could think of any arts metaphor and it would do really. A lump of clay, a rhythmic sound, some small kinesthetic movement, a story that contains the makings of a drama--any one or combination of these would speak to the shaping and forming of a dynamic, imaginative pedagogy. Add to all that an ever-present willingness among facilitators and students alike, to take risks, to experiment, to put oneself *out there*. This risk-taking was evident throughout the life of the program and was one of its enduring strengths. Many former students spoke of the dynamic effect that the risk-taking learning had on their subsequent practices as arts therapists as well as on their pursuit of their art.

¹⁹⁹ David J. Boud. *Peer Learning in Higher Education: Learning from and with each other*, (London. Kogan Page, 2001). Also, David Boud and N. Miller, eds., *Working With Experience: Animating Learning*. (London & New York: Kogan Page.1996).

²⁰⁰ Peter Abbs.

²⁰¹ Kenneth Bruffee, *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence and the Authority of Knowledge. 2nd Edition*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) 179,180.

4.10 Summary

In summary, it seems possible to read the core of arts based learning for MCAT students as a circular process. Broadly speaking, by the time the students reached their final year of study they were generally able to do the following: to take an idea about creative arts therapy processes and locate and represent it in an art form and, conversely, to take an art form and conceptualise it as therapeutic. All of these were precursors to practice situations. The learning moved in an upward spiral fashion beginning with an exploration of the arts and of therapeutic helping, on through the hands-on exploration of specific arts modalities and mediums and their respective theoretical considerations to a multimodal context of practice with the practicum placement augmented by studio workshops, and thence to a final consolidation of these learning experiences in the minor research project. In concert with relevant theoretical perspectives, the Program invited students to approach learning through arts based experiences, allowing them to acquire a direct understanding the characteristics, the dynamics and the qualities of their learning, distinguishing it from mere competency acquisition.

This chapter has provided a biography of the MCAT program, one that has emphasised the process of evolution to an arts based approach to learning. The following chapter, The Arts Based Project portrays, through a creative process of imaginative reconstruction, the lived experiences of all that has been described in this chapter. Imaginary conversations and learning vignettes highlight the experiences of learning and teaching creative arts therapy.

Chapter 5

The Arts Based Project

PICTURE THIS...Imaginative Reconstructions of Learning Events & Encounters

I further argue that if educational stories are to reach maturity as a form of educational research, some of the most insightful among them must be left, at least momentarily, unaccompanied by critique or theory.²⁰²

The time has come, the Walrus said, "To talk of many things:
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax
Of cabbages and Kings
And why the Sea is boiling hot
And whether pigs have wings.

(Tweedledee, reciting "The Walrus and the Carpenter," st. 11)

Preface

This chapter forms the arts based project component of my thesis. It is composed of a series of imagined conversations, interspersed with vignettes and anecdotes, all of which represent the learning and teaching that occurred in the RMIT-MCAT program over its eleven and a half year life. My own experiences of coordinating the program and facilitating the learning, necessarily interweave with those of the others. My aim is to capture, through a fictionalised portrayal, the impressions and the sense of involvement of program participants (graduates, former students, and teachers, many of whom have provided me with accounts of their experiences in the program), and to recapture the essences and nuances of teaching and learning in the MCAT program. I am especially interested to portray experiences of learning through the arts, which I designate as arts based learning.

The imagined conversations, vignettes and anecdotes depict participants' experiences in a program in which art and education intersected in the service of arts based therapy. The conversations threaded through the text are interspersed with a collection of vignettes that represent particular learning experiences. Some vignettes are purely fact-based fictions while others are imaginative reconstructions of learning events that were offered in the program over several years. For the latter I have taken various details from a recurring learning event and used them to compose the vignette as an exemplar. Taken together, they may be seen as like a collection of multicoloured mosaics

²⁰² Barone, *Aesthetics*, 92.

which when placed together, form a discernible picture of student involvement in arts based learning events and encounters. Overall, the text may also be read, loosely, as a story of the MCAT program

As previously noted, I have drawn on multiple sources for this imaginative reconstruction; among them are my own experiences as the program coordinator. My recall of events is at times quite vivid, and it has been expanded through a variety of resources that include the following: comments and ideas expressed in conversational interviews I conducted with graduates and teachers, snippets of written feedback in students' course evaluations and learning logs, my records both formal and informal, of meetings with students, teachers and program advisors, and personal reflections and notations of conversations in the journals I kept over the life of the program. As well, I have included excerpts of papers presented to educational conferences, and my reflections on the works of selected writers.

Also noted earlier, the structure of the text loosely emulates Steinbeck's contrapuntal model of juxtaposing dialogic and descriptive narratives. The imagined conversations and the vignettes are set out under the heading, "Picture This." I liken the vignettes to the kind of short film or video that one might find on YouTube. Juxtaposed to these are a series of personal summaries entitled, Reflections & Commentary. These comprise my observations and accounts of my own experiences of learning and teaching; work with students and colleagues in workshops and classes, and my reflections on aspects of the MCAT learning landscape. Taken together, they comprise a retrospective exploration of the spaces, materials and processes of the educational encounters, and reiterate some of the theoretical perspectives and values that informed the MCAT approach to learning. I intend these Reflections to serve as metaphorical anchors to the imaginative reconstructions.

In attempting to illuminate arts based learning in the MCAT program, I am mindful of Eisner's question, "How do you recreate an event or experience so that it can be known by others who weren't there?"²⁰³ to which I mentally add, "and be instantly recognisable by those who were?" Therefore, it is my hope that that the reader is able to picture the events being portrayed, and thus, to imagine how the learning occurred. I hope too, that the story provides a lively illumination of the sights and sounds of the MCAT program, how it looked and sounded to those of us who participated in it.

²⁰³ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 37.

Notes to the Reader

Pseudonyms are used in all the dialogues and imagined conversations. The text is narrated in a first-person format; my voice is heard as the narrator and in the conversations. The tense is mixed: predominantly in the present, but occasionally reverts to past.

The fictional storyline is this: A conversation at a pub gathering as a kind of wake for the MCAT program leads on to a weekend reunion of program participants five years thereafter at a property west of Melbourne. At this gathering, I have requested time to share my research data and to extend it by way of focused conversations.



Imagined Conversations and Vignettes

Picture This... Endings and Beginnings

‘So, now that it’s all come to an end, Gerry— what were the best times and worst times in your years as the program coordinator.’

‘Ah Miranda, interesting turn of phrase’ I smiled. *‘With a little Dickensian allusion.’*

It was late on a November Sunday afternoon and a group of us, students and teachers from the creative arts therapy (MCAT) program, had gathered at the local pub for our regular close-of-weekend-workshop drinks. However, this afternoon’s gathering was a special one, as it marked not only the last class of the year, but after almost 12 years, the closing of the program. Hence the student’s question put to me amidst the pub noise and the sorting of drinks orders, held particular meaning and significance.

‘Well, I’d have to say that the very worst moment was being told by the Deputy Vice Chancellor that the university had decided to close the MCAT program and that the decision was non-negotiable. It came ‘out of the blue’ with no consultation and was presented as a done deal. The DVC stated that the decision was made on various grounds, ones that I countered as unsubstantiated as well as some that were patently untrue. But the decision was not up for discussion. Thus my reference to the guillotine.’

I recalled how the students had subsequently fought, without success, to keep the program open. They did, however, manage to prevail in their demand that the closing date be extended for eighteen months to allow all students to complete the degree or diploma for which they’d enrolled.

I continued my response to Miranda’s question as the others gathered around.

‘It’s hard to choose a single best time, because over these eleven years I’ve been privileged to meet a wonderful array of people who created so many really fine moments. Everyone who’s participated in the program has enhanced my knowledge about different things - most particularly about art, but also about ways of learning and about diverse approaches to therapy. There would be dozens of examples - some experiences were ‘writ large’ others were quite small, but all those instances of learning or flashes of insight will live on for me in both memory and practice. I was continually struck by the power of the imagination, of creativity and truly intrigued by the transformative potential of the arts. Being involved in the work has been a supreme pleasure. One of the goals of my research project is to try to capture and record those experiences.’

‘You should write a play about it.’ Tom said to me, as he returned to the table with a tray of drinks.

‘Nice idea, Tom, but I’m not a playwright.’

‘Yeah, but you’re a good storyteller – you could probably make it happen. And then,’ he laughed, *‘we could all come back and act in it.’*

'Or we could make a movie,' said Dave.

'Maybe so.' I replied. 'When you think about the very fine DVDs that are attached to students' minor research projects, it seems that this might be the ideal medium for telling some of the stories about the program and the learning that's transpired over these eleven and a half years.'

'It's not such a far-out idea.' Ben added. 'I'm taking a course in digital storytelling, and I tell you, the possibilities are endless.'

'It's a tempting idea, and I'll keep it in mind. But, at this point, what about the rest of you?'

I looked around at the group; some had been colleagues, some I had mentored in their early teaching careers, but on this day, most were part of the last cohort of students I had taught and supervised. As with all who had graduated from the program, facilitating their learning about therapy in general and creative arts therapy in particular had been a rare privilege.

'How would you sum up your experiences in the program?' I asked.

'Two words: life changing.' Dave offered.

'For sure that, and much for the better.' Ben affirmed and others nodded.

'Terrific learning experiences – about the arts, about the business of play, and coming to understand the importance of both to personal wellbeing.' Stacey offered.

'The idea of therapy as an offer and a co-creative experience – that was a wonderful revelation.' Marcus opined.

'And the great experiences of the Practicum Placements and the adjunct Studios that brought the whole learning thing together.' said Tom.

'More than there's time to cover here and now.' Bryce added.

There is a momentary silence then Siobhan spoke up.

'Just before we wrap up here, I want to throw in some kudos for us, and what we were part of over this last decade. I don't know if you'll be able to get all this stuff into your research project, Gerry, and I know – I know! I'm not supposed to speak for the group, but I just have to add my 2-bob about the dynamic learning that went on in the MCAT program. I do know that I'm not alone when I say that there was never a day of our student presentations when I wasn't just 'blown away' by the experience. Seeing people put themselves out there, and watching me doing it myself – each of us taking risks by stepping outside our comfort zones.'

She took a quick sip of her drink then continued.

'And learning to 'get out of our own way' as Donna used to say. I don't want to sound sophomoric, but the whole course of study really was something memorable!'

'But, not always in the best of ways for everyone.' Stacey interjected. *'Let's be real here, and acknowledge that for some people it was not just difficult but ultimately impossible to be a part of.'*

'Too true.' I indicated my agreement. *'We need not mythologize the program just because it's been axed.'*

'Ok, Ok.' Siobhan put up both her hands defensively then continued. *'It's just that I couldn't have imagined this kind of learning experience if I hadn't actually been part of it. I came to call my it "My Secret Life" 'cause I knew that my family and many of my friends would never understand what we were on about when we were messing about and acting out in our classes. "How is that learning?" they'd have said. And I mean, there were times at the end of those weekends when I'd be sitting on the tram on my way home thinking – 'did we really do all that?' – and then my mind would be filled with all the questions that the workshop evoked. Reminds me of the famous last line in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Universe" where he says, "The answer is 42, but what was the question?" I mean really! How could the university be so bloody short-sighted?'*

I smiled at Siobhan's passion. *'I take it that last question is purely rhetorical – yes?'* and I raised my glass to the gathering.

'So I guess this is a toast – to all of you, and absent friends, my huge thanks for an absolutely splendid time!'

Glasses were raised all 'round and then people began to bid their farewells with a promise to catch up again at the MCAT program's closing Party in a month's time. As the group disbursed and people made their way out into the twilight, Tom called out,

'Don't forget – we gotta' make a movie.'

'You bet.' Another voice replied.

'I'm serious. It could be a great adventure.'

Endings and beginnings, I thought. What's that cliché about one door closing as another one opens? It could be that.



Picture This.... Recalling the MCAT Experience

Fast-forward five years to a property west of Melbourne where a number of MCAT graduates and former program facilitators have gathered for the weekend. They have come to make plans for an MCAT reunion and they have agreed to assist me with my research project. Many in the group have been to this lovely property on past occasions, for drama and storytelling workshops; invariably it is a place of laughter and warm vibes with hosts who have been directly involved in the program.

On this warm springtime morning folks were lingering over coffee on the wide homestead verandah, sharing stories about their current arts therapy practices and the professional activities that have taken them to various conferences and workshops in Australia and abroad. Talk of a reunion had included finding ways to get in touch with those international graduates who had returned to their home countries, as well as those working in different parts of Australia. The possibility of inviting Professor Martin Comte to attend as the keynote speaker had been flagged; Martin is well known for his role as the visionary and driving force in establishing the MCAT program and several of the graduates recalled his addresses to the annual MCAT Colloquium as wonderfully knowledgeable and entertaining. This led to some reminiscing of MCAT experiences and, subsequently, to a discussion about arts therapy research and related projects, including mine. As the group began to disperse, Marcus clinked his spoon against his water glass in a call for attention.

‘Before we break up for the morning, I just want to let you all know that some of us are meeting in about ten minutes to do some reunion planning. Then, after morning tea, we’ll gather in the old shearing shed where Gerry has asked us to act as a kind of focus group to help her research project.’

Marcus turned to me and continued.

‘We haven’t caught up for a while, Gerry and, as one of the people you interviewed, I’m interested to hear about where your research project is up to and what you’ve found out from it. Would you like to tell us how we can help you with it at this stage?’

‘Well, I have quite a lot of data, Marcus,’ I replied. ‘and not just from the interviews – though those were a rich resource. I’d like to share it with you all, and I’d welcome your comments. I thought it might spark recollections of the program.’

Dana: *‘Like Marcus, I was one of the grads that you interviewed, and at the time, it sounded interesting and affirming of our experiences in the MCAT program. So I’m very interested to hear about it.’*

Mick: *‘A few of us were talking last evening about some things we remembered from our time in the program – you know, those sorts of memories that spring from talk about our current CAT practices.’*

‘Well,’ I said, ‘you may recognize some of the experiences that the data has turned up.’

Elaina: *‘Yes, and when we were reminiscing, I was struck by the extent of our collective wisdom about arts therapy education. It occurred to me that we could construct a truly formidable program proposal if the possibility ever arose.’*

Zac: *‘Listening to this conversation, I’m thinking that this is shaping up for some creative collaboration. How about we pass the word around to the others who gone off for a stroll, that*

we'll be meeting.'

And so, at mid morning, we congregated in the old shearing shed.

Marcus again opened the discussion: *'I wonder if it might be useful to start by hearing some of the details of your research, Gerry – you mentioned your data this morning.'*

'Thanks Marcus, I did come prepared to share my project with you all, and I really appreciate your willingness to give me your time. I do want to ask permission to audiotape our conversation here as I'm expecting some interesting things to emerge. As with the interviews, I won't be quoting anyone directly, but rather hoping to be reminded of things I may have missed, or perhaps corrected on details of some learning event that I haven't got quite right. Would that be all right?'

People nodded their assent. We were seated in a kind of loose circle, with some people in chairs and some on cushions on the floor. I was reminded of the way that interactive discussions had looked and sounded in the MCAT's classes and workshops as students found themselves a comfortable space from which to contribute. The conversation continued as I set up a small tape recorder on the table.

Dana: *'Some of us were comparing our program to others that are still running in Melbourne where we've had experience with teaching some courses or supervising their students in their practicum placements. We were saying that there are many ways of looking at how the learning experiences were offered to MCAT students, but no matter your viewpoint, the program still seems to embody a distinctive approach to learning creative arts therapy.'*

Mick: *'You're right Dana, there are several ways to recall and reconstruct the learning in the program. My recall is definitely around the arts experiences, probably because I'm a visual artist. But, I know that some people think about the various courses and remember the ones that stood out for them.'*

'Well, Mick' I said. *'As I may have mentioned, my research is into the qualities of arts based learning in the MCAT program so that's what I want to foreground. Having said that, I've realised that all the courses had elements of arts based learning, and the arts modalities contained didactic features. So I think its fair to say that the salient feature of our program was that it was arts based.'*

Marcus: *'By qualities, I'm guessing you mean things like imaginative, playful, sensory, reflective, and so on'*

Elaina: *'And others like, creative, experimental, collaborative, risk-taking, humorous, cognitively and emotionally expansive, improvisational – the list goes on.'*

Tom spoke out at this point. *'Improvisation! That was a big one for me and I think it was something that was definitely present in all the learning events, as you call them. We, you and I, did a great improv together, Gerry – remember?'*

'If we're thinking of the same one.' I replied and smiled at the recollection.

'Bet on it!' he grinned. Tom paused to sip his coffee as he looked around at his colleagues. A tall, lanky fellow, Tom loved telling stories, especially on himself. At this point he shook his head, and

chuckled, then continued. *‘Just for a moment, picture this.’*

Vignette I ~ Learning Event: Improvisation

Picture This...

‘We’re in class, it’s a Saturday afternoon, just after lunch, and we’re dealing with some learning issue that had been started at the end of the morning session. I can’t recall what exactly what it was but I seemed to be at the centre of the process, and I do remember feeling tied up in knots of confusion. I was sitting on the floor feeling so frustrated that I wanted to punch something, and I couldn’t for the life of me, explain what I was on about to the facilitators. The rest of the class was standing watching, and probably wondering what to say. Jay held out my violin to me as an offer of help, but I didn’t want the damn thing and that offer just made me more frustrated. Anyhow, at about that point, Gerry, you came into our classroom – we were in the big one in Bldg. 94 that we always opened into a double space. We had these long carpets spread out diagonally across the floor – again, I can’t remember why – but I’m sitting there feeling really shitty. Gerry walks straight over to me and asks if I’d like to crawl through the rugs with her. God knows why, but immediately it seemed like the most logical thing to do! So without another word, we scooted under the rugs and began pulling ourselves along by our elbows like lizards or something. About half way through, we pause, and she says, “how’re you doing?” and I said something like, “OK, but I don’t know what I’m going to say when we come out the other end” and she says, “Well, maybe you don’t need to say anything.” I remember thinking at the time, ‘Wow! How empowering is that - not to have to explain your actions to anyone, no matter how crazy or dumb they may look!’ Anyhow, we kept on crawling along and then came out the other end. We stood up, dusted ourselves off, and looked around the room. Neither of us said anything.’



Marcus: *‘Did the others say anything about what they’d witnessed - you two crawling under the carpets?’*

Tom: *‘Someone asked Gerry how she knew to do that, and she replied that in fact, she didn’t have any plan in mind when she initiated the action - that, intuitively, it just seemed right. But, as we gathered around to discuss the process, you commented, Gerry, that sometimes in therapy as in life, what’s needed is a ‘circuit-breaker’ – some action that allows everyone involved in a situation to take a step back or sideways, without any judgement – probably like what kids mean when they say, “Just Chill.” I think we also talked about how the action was playful, which is an essential element of CAT.’*

‘By way of Winnicott²⁰⁴ you may recall.’ I enjoined. ‘I do remember one of the students observing that the action gave great closure to what had started as a difficult situation. I think I may have suggested that it was an example of both ‘trusting the process’ and the importance of trust in a therapeutic construct. I wasn’t doing therapy with Tom, but there was an implied trust that allowed us to work together with something that might otherwise have just seemed too ridiculous. It was an offer that he chose to accept.’

Tom: ‘For me, the whole experience reinforced the power of the arts - in this case drama-improv and, what was more important then, was the power of someone being present for me. I’d never experienced that before and it absolutely personified the meaning of being present with another person. That was one theme that I think pervaded all of our learning as arts therapists, and one I certainly struggled to embody in my early work with clients.’

‘Thanks, Tom’ I said, ‘for reminding me about one of the most memorable teaching experiences in my MCAT repertoire. My actions really were spontaneous; in the moment, I had no idea what we would do with the experience, so in many ways it also represents that aspect of risk-taking that we offer to clients but which we as therapists have to be prepared to embrace.’

Elaina: Tom’s story makes me think of those wonderful anecdotes you used to tell, Gerry, about the psychiatrist, Milton Erickson’s²⁰⁵ approach to therapy; how he would do something with clients that on the face of it seemed completely outrageous, but that surprised them into thinking differently about themselves or their situation.’

‘Some of those are really great, Elaina, like the one about throwing the mismatched rubber boots out to clients in his waiting room, saying put these on and then abruptly closing the door. That introduction of something surprising as a way of short-circuiting the client’s worries. On the surface they make you laugh and, I might add, can provide humour to the client. The sub-text is then one of possibilities and hope, that none of us is necessarily, permanently stuck in a life situation; what we may need is someone offers us an exit. These are powerful examples of an approach to the therapeutic process that embraces improvisation, humour and an unequivocal expectation of positive outcomes for the clients.’

Tom: ‘Which is what happened in that learning event that I described. So much learning and potential for change was contained within those few minutes of an action.

Miranda: ‘I wasn’t present for that class Tom was describing, but, listening to his account, reminds me those ‘aha’ learning moments which for me, always seemed to appear when we were involved in something experiential using the arts. I had one early in my days as a student, when in the class we were asked to, “make an image of yourself.” I kept the image, even to this day. It was a defining moment for me.’

Elaina: ‘Yes, creative and improvisational, and deeply felt – as you were just saying, Gerry about Erickson’s work. One thing I learned in the program is that the presence of humour and play does not make the actions superficial. On the contrary. I seemed to especially ‘get it’ in our Studio Workshops when we were exploring or replicating situations from our practicum placements and

²⁰⁴ D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 54, in which the author advises of the fundamental importance of the therapist’s ability to play because it is in playing that we are being creative.

²⁰⁵ Milton H. Erickson, MD. *A Teaching Seminar* (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis Group, 1980).

looking at how to foster engagement and collaboration with clients through various art forms. As a visual artist, it was a new perspective for me, as doing art had always meant momentarily shutting out the world.'

'It makes me think that, from one point of view, all the arts based learning was, indeed, improvisational.' I said. *'On reflection, we could well have begun Year 1 courses with a drama-improv workshop. The ideas about creative arts therapy that the program asked students to consider were predicated on, among other things, a sense of arts therapy as an opportunity for clients to explore, to experiment, which is to improvise, as the therapist is not there to direct the process or provide a 'recipe.'*

Tom: *That also takes in two significant things I learned – and didn't fully understand until I got into my Practicum placement, I should add. That one feature of the arts therapist's role is to be present as witness to the client's creative process and, thus, collaborates with the client in his or her discoveries. And, that those often include a new-found acceptance of oneself, that its ok to be different and more broadly that each of us has our own uniqueness. It's a process that can be revelatory. I'm thinking now about arts therapy theorist-practitioners such as Warren, Landy, Jennings and Jones, and psychotherapists like Rogers, Spinelli and Yalom, all of whom embrace the notion of therapy as a journey of personal discovery.'*

Ben: *I second that, Tom – also with your mention of Practicum. I really enjoyed my experience in Practicum Placements. For me, that was where it all came together and I could see what CAT meant - and the sense that, "Yes, I can really do this work." I found that working alongside the client made for a level playing field. The therapist making art crosses beyond the notion of 'zero self-disclosure' because making or creating beside the client means you can't tell where it will take you so you are both searching, struggling and discovering. It's very powerful.*

Zac: *'As you would know from my time as a student, Gerry, I'm a fairly concrete sort of thinker and, if its not out of line with this discussion, I'd be interested to hear about how you decided to teach the various courses. I often wondered, as I was going through the MCAT program, how the structure got built. Especially as it seemed quite loose, maybe 'fluid' is a better word, at certain times.*

I smiled at Zac and affirmed his comments.

'You are quite right, Zac. The curriculum was to some extent, an evolving one and we were not working from any textbook on how to teach creative arts therapy. I think MCAT was itself a creative work in progress, though with well-anchored educational concepts of what we were trying to accomplish with students. Interestingly, my literature searches for this research project have retrospectively confirmed that what the program offered was conceptually grounded. Even those seemingly 'fluid' aspects that were creative and arts based.

I paused for a sip of water and then continued.

'Perhaps, in our discussions over these next couple of days, I could share some of my own learning experiences that arose from my teaching and coordinating work with you all. Looking back, I'm aware that my learning about the arts was enormous, the arts in education and the arts in therapy. In any case the comments that came out of my interviews and from student evaluation forms about how the learning was experienced, may be of interest to you all. I haven't yet put this data into any

particular order, so sharing it may help me to organise my thoughts about it.'

Again, people affirmed their assent by nodding and gesturing for me to continue.

'Ok, well I'd like to begin by sharing the responses I got when I asked interviewees what metaphor they might use to describe the program. I really enjoyed the array of responses and thought you all might as well. I invite you to 'Picture These.'

An Eastern Marketplace with all the colours, sounds and smells; crowds -throngs of people moving this way and that, some standing still watching, others at stalls looking at materials and objects or in the doorways of small shops; Sellers are yelling out about their wares, somebody is playing on a drum, another making music on a flute - a kind of orderly chaos – that's my view of the program.

- A Marching Band where everyone seems to be in step but not quite; all playing the same note but not quite, and all enjoying the experience but with some individual reservations.
- A Woven Tapestry frayed at the edges with tight pieces of little pictures within the big picture. People are holding the tapestry, moving it up and down, dancing with it, ripping it up, setting it on fire – it's like watching a film go through the reels, even as a new tapestry is being started over in the corner.
- Circles intersecting and multilayered, representing each of us supporting and being supported by, the others.
- Like a Big Blue Wave about to break, but always rising and repeating.
- The Game of a Group Creating a Machine where each person provides a movement and a sound, and together we momentarily create one image – a working system where each individual is part of a working whole – fun and playful but at the same time requiring concentration and attention to the others.
- An Interesting Walk in the Countryside where you could lose the path, but feel OK then find it again, over and over again.
- A Collection of Hats that keep getting handed on, some fit and some don't fit, but everyone is keen to try them on and to look at themselves in a mirror – to see themselves differently.
- A Child's Toy - colour and shape intertwined, both clear and not clear in direction - allowing the individual to see it from her or his perspective.



I looked up from my notes and asked the group, *'What do you think of those?'*

Dana was the first to respond. *'I think that each of them conjures up an accurate metaphorical picture of the program – by accurate I mean that I as the listener who was also a participant, can immediately relate to. I like them.'*

Zac: *I was making notes as I listened and I'm struck with the idea that if I hadn't been in the program, I would still have an overall impression of it as something fluid, dynamic. Taken together, the metaphors seem to denote a program that offered ambiguity, paradox, chaos and harmony all at once.'*

Tom: *'All in one weekend, you may recall! Also describes the arts therapy process. I listened to these metaphors and thought the same as you Zac, as well as remembering that in the midst of the Marketplace or while we ripped up the Tapestry, the facilitators made us feel secure, contained, cared for, valued and respected.'*

'One of the things that stood out when I reviewed student evaluations of the various courses' I said, 'was the repeated reference to learning spaces with thumbs up for the Studio space and thumbs down on the Classroom. Comments like, "Learning in the Studio seemed to heighten the energy level of the class." The Fieldwork experiences that were part of some courses also got a lot of kudos.'

Siobhan: *I would definitely second that. The Studio was a great learning space. I enjoyed the fieldwork assignments, and they set me up nicely for my Practicum. The Art Gallery fieldwork was fun and interesting – a surprise learning technique that showed me I needed to expose myself to more art.'*

Elaina: *I loved working in the Studio – sometimes it was a bit crazy and chaotic, and took time to make sense of everything that had gone on, but I tell you, I never wanted to miss a class that was scheduled for that space. I remember it as generating a kind of 'forced freedom' if that makes sense. You just had to let go of preconceived notions.'*

Marcus: *'Which may go some way to explain why some students were so uncomfortable with Studio classes and found it hard if not impossible to participate. There was nowhere to hide, literally and figuratively.'* He paused then asked me, *'What are some of the other comments you found, Gerry?'*

'Well' I replied, 'one that caught my interest was, "Engaged most with participatory learning when it was interactive and witnessed (more so than just experiential)." This was reiterated with comments about the value of being witnessed, and of learning to witness – what that meant in real terms. Several students in first year courses expressed a wish for more of that – which did happen in the second year courses and in the Practicum Studio workshops and, of course for real, in Practicum Placements.'

Elaina: *'I have to say it took me the better part of the three years to get a handle on the full meaning of the arts therapist's role as witness. I finally came to understand it as a tangible expression of 'being present' with the client. I remember an early discussion about Carl Rogers' ideas about being with not for the client, a distinction that, as I said, took me some time to understand. I reflected on those concepts and the practice of them a lot, and still do as a professional therapist. Not easy but essential to practice.'*

Siobhan: *For me our experiential and art focused learning was a major source of understanding both those concepts. We were continually witnessing our own and each other's creative works in classes and studio workshops, and we were asked - no, required - to be fully present in the process. Many colleagues agreed with me that the small group work was particularly good for practicing it.'*

'That is born out in some of the feedback and eval comments, Siobhan' I said. 'Phrases like, "Most

engaged in small group work and discussions.” “Experiential arts based opportunities in small groups has opened me up in a surprising way - a great learning process.” “Enjoyed small group work where interaction is heightened - studio work, hands-on work was great.” “Presentation and group work heightened learning.” *‘Also a nice observation that, “Overall, but especially in small groups - stretched, unravelled, destabilised as a learner - great!”’*

Levi: *‘Brings to mind my experiences of process illumination in the ‘fishbowl’ exercises. Those were always the culmination of small group work in the Therapeutic Relationships course in our first year, and provided each small group with an opportunity to both present our creative process and to examine our own process while being witnessed by the rest of the class. It was multi-layered and challenging - often pretty confronting learning, but I don’t think I could have achieved such a clear understanding of group process without those experiences. And, it occurs to me that those fishbowls were a prime example of you, as the teacher, Gerry, being with us but not for us.’*

Mick: *‘I agree with Levi on all of that. I found creativity in the small groups exciting and engaging, and I really looked forward to the fishbowl processing that followed them. In fact, I was a bit disappointed that these didn’t continue in the second year courses.’*

‘I understand what you’re saying, Mick.’ I said, nodding to him. *‘It’ speaks to the array of material and learning approaches we wanted to cover with so little time to implement all of them’*

I returned to my notes and continued. *‘Some other evaluation comments that stood out for me are ones whose perspectives on the learning were a bit unexpected. For example: “Expressing thoughts and feelings on a painting most helped me to take responsibility for my own learning” and “Initially shocked by minimal instruction but I learned that not much is needed to activate a group” and this one: “I was reassured by facilitators own experiences of fear and confusion.” All interesting, I think, and quite affirming.’*

Miranda: *What about purely negative feedback? There must have been some of that since the course evaluations were unsigned and anonymous. As a student, I heard my share of grouching about things in the program. Probably did a bit myself, come to that.’*

‘Indeed, Miranda. There were negative comments, some helpful and some not so much. Of the former, I’d say these were requests for more of something, like a few students who said they wanted their ideas to be more strongly challenged by the facilitators, and others who would have liked more days in class for processing, but added that what was offered experientially provided great testing of theories for practice.’ One odd comment was that there was a “lack of diversity in student cohorts - all middle class and educated.” ‘I’m not sure what we were meant to do with that one.’

I’d want to add that the most comprehensive student evaluations were given to the Dramatherapy modality, with comments like, “Drama in therapy is very potent” “Invaluable to have had two knowledgeable practitioners and to experience their different approaches such as (props) Patrick and (no props) Donna” “One of the best modalities - content was as hard or as easy as the student chose it to be” “Large numbers of students resistant to physical or verbal creativity” “Heightened my awareness about play and role-play; value of risk taking and creativity for growth”

“Experiential learning most useful and stimulating.” And of course, the top one which you’ll all recognise that was, “Loved the Magic Curtain!” From my perspective as program coordinator, Dramatherapy was the course, that each year, students were most excited about and most fearful

of.'

'Apart from Practicum that is, or so I would think.' Tom added with a laugh.

'Indeed' I smiled my agreement with him. 'Practicum Placements were a world of their own. But, I'll share some of the student feedback about those a little later on.'

At this point someone noted that we'd been at it for just on three hours, and that people might be feeling the need of a break, for tea or just some fresh air. We agreed to resume the brainstorming and shared experiences in the morning, and adjourned into the warm afternoon sunlight.



Reflections & Commentary I ~ The 'Aha moments

During my tenure in the MCAT program, learning encounters with creative arts therapy students allowed me to witness learning processes (events) in which imagination seemed to take material shape through engagement with one or more art form. These events were often fleeting, but within the moment that they occurred, something ineffable seemed to happen; what might be called a transformative shift appeared to precipitate experiences which altered the student's sense of self, as well as his or her capacity to, in broad terms, perceive the world differently. Most particularly for the learning, to glimpse the tangible reality of art-as-therapy. These moments were variously referred to, by students and teachers alike, as *aha* or *eureka* (learning) experiences; some spoke of a *click* - a good friend offered the phrase, *geological moments of thought* and I sometimes conceived of them as *inklings* or as a moment of *spin*. Students often recalled *when the penny dropped*, or referred to the experience of *getting it* (even whilst unsure of what constitutes the *it*). I think that these descriptive adjectives represented a kind of grappling – with the arts based experience itself as well with the ambiguity that is art, that is learning, that is therapy. Not least, was a glimpse of oneself as arts therapists. On reflection, it does seem that these moments embodied Eisner's notion of looking at the event, and what the event does to one's experience. Within this framework, what the events did to my experience as a teacher and as a therapist was to expand my repertoire of ideas about learning and therapy and thus, to become increasingly intrigued with the place of the arts within both. Moreover, I was thus led to wonder about what students and teachers made of these experiences beyond those 'aha' moments.



The following morning we gathered again, in the shearing shed. I'd been asked to present some of the Learning Vignettes from the MCAT years, but before getting into those, Elaina opened the

discussion by asking if anyone had anything to add from our brainstorming session of yesterday afternoon.

Siobhan: *'I was reflecting last evening on some of what we talked about, and thinking about how it took me most of my time as an MCAT student to realise that the core of the learning was to become self-aware. I won't speak for the group, though I know that others had a similar experience because we've talked about it. I went into the program thinking it would teach me specific strategies - a recipe, if you will - about how to **do** creative arts therapy, and I think for most of my first year, I kept waiting for that to happen. It wasn't until the end of the second semester course in Therapeutic Relationships that I realised I was starting to see myself differently. That what I needed to understand, in depth, was how I relate to all sorts of things: to groups, to art forms, to different roles - as artist, helper, colleague. Ultimately, how to see myself as an arts therapist with clients. The penny began to drop in second year after the Drama/Storytelling modality, but really, it wasn't until I got out on Practicum that I could see the woods for the trees, as they say.'*

Tom: *'I had a similar experience, Siobhan, and it included sometimes feeling a real resistance to what was being offered in a workshop, 'cause I wanted the facilitator to just tell me how to do creative arts therapy - enough of the exploratory questions and creative processes to work them through for myself. It was damn hard work!'*

Levi: *'So, can we hear some of those vignettes that you've composed, Gerry? I'd be really interested. I enjoyed the interview that you did with me; after about four years working as a CAT, it was a great opportunity to think back to some of the learning experiences and to link them with my practice. Some of the others here have also expressed an interest in hearing what you've come up with.'*

'Thanks Levi, I'd like to share some of them with you all, and get your responses and impressions of them from any of you who care to comment. They may spark you to recall extra details or give a slightly different perspective. In any case and since you've so kindly asked, let me begin with a couple from Year 1 of the program where, as I've just mentioned, the courses were Art as Experience, Creative Arts Modality 1 and Therapeutic Relationships. You may remember your own experience of the workshops as I read them to you.'

I gathered my notes and offered some vignettes of Year 1 learning events.

'Let me begin by saying that the first course, Art as Experience was initially offered in 2003 and represented the second tangible shift in the MCAT curriculum toward a comprehensive arts based learning focus. The first was a change to the parameters of the Minor Research Project in Year 3, but I'll come back to that one later. The course, Art as Experience was devised when some of the teaching staff and I came to realise that rather than starting with a study of the therapeutic relationship, it was more important that students begin with an exploration of the role of the arts in society; the spaces, forms and materials as well as the concepts and practice of experiencing and engaging with the arts. We borrowed the title for this new introductory course, from Dewey's²⁰⁶ well-known text. We used a quotation from Arnheim²⁰⁷ who, in referring to art, argues that, "What

²⁰⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*.

²⁰⁷ Arnheim, *To the Rescue of Art*, 156.

strikes the eye provides a life-giving energy,” and posed this as a focus for an individual fieldwork assignment. The course was also designed to have students begin to consider the experience of art as potentially transformative, as well as to reflect on, or begin to think of themselves as artists within an art form of their choosing.’

Adrienne: *‘I remember it as a good course, and a really excellent beginning, especially for someone like myself who is not (or should I say, was not) an artist. My undergrad degree was in social work, and while I’ve always been interested and engaged with the arts, I never considered myself as artistic. The program certainly changed that.’*

‘The feedback on the new course was generally very positive,’ I said. ‘I’m glad we amended the curriculum to offer it, and it was the start of what I thought was some very thoughtful curriculum amendments. Interestingly though, a couple of the course workshops were identified by some of the students as among the most confronting they experienced in the entire program.’

Adrienne: *‘I’d wager one of them was The Blank Page. I remember it as being really difficult, but more than that, finding out that even some in the class who were artists found it unsettling.’*

‘Indeed, The Blank Page. Let me know what this vignette brings to mind.’

Vignette II ~ Learning Event: The Blank Page

Picture This...

It’s the Sunday morning of the second weekend in the Art as Experience course, and the students have gathered in the Classroom space. Carmen, who is a printmaker, and graduate of the MCAT program, has joined them as the workshop facilitator. At her request, the students have formed a large circle next to or behind a table and, on the whiteboard they read a quotation from Warren’s text which says:

We each have to have experienced the challenge of being faced with a blank page, or an empty stage, or the request to improve around a theme, to understand the problem it can present for others.²⁰⁸

Without any discussion about the quotation, students are asked take a blank piece of paper and to sit with it. They are also asked to have a notebook and pencil handy in which to record their thoughts as they sit and view the empty page; they are encouraged to not censor their thoughts as they record them. Carmen calls time at the conclusion of five minutes, and instructs the students to begin some creative expression based on their experience of the previous five minutes; to take as much time as they need to begin, and to continue their parallel note-taking as they wished during the whole process. Students begin – some with frustration, some with energy and involvement in the process. A few students have difficulty holding the moment and a couple actually leave the class space temporarily,

²⁰⁸ Warren, *Using the Creative Arts in Therapy*.

whilst others seem, for a time, lost in their own worlds. The learning activity continues for about ninety minutes or until all students indicate that they have completed their creative work. After an early lunch break, students return to class to break into small learning groups for one hour. They are invited to discuss the following question: *In what way(s) is engagement with the blank page important to the creative process?* Each group is to collaborate in writing a paragraph that addresses the question. Students then reconvene as one large group to discuss and share their group responses. The following themes emerge:

- The idea of the blank page as a doorway, a screen or a mirror.
- The fear of beginning; it can feel extremely uncomfortable. Some express the potential usefulness of a pre warm-up, especially with clients. This is debated, as other students feel that any lines and squiggles are part of the creative process and should be taken seriously by client and therapist. Questions are raised about just how comfortable the client needs to feel as they start, with some feeling that warm-ups might lead to a loss of the mirror effect of the blank page and blunt emotions that may arise. The notion of ‘play’ is also spoken about at length, this being an important feature of the arts therapy experience.
- Creative blocks; what they mean and how to deal with them as a therapist with a client, as well as in one’s own creative work. Also, idea of Tension as an important element to beginning creative expression.
- Boundaries of the ‘empty page’ conceptualised in a variety of ways.

There is general acknowledgement among the students that there could be no single answer to the question, and it would vary each time a therapist worked with a client.

Carmen adds some ideas for consideration, noting that the Blank Page exercise is multimodal. She suggests that, *“If one pays close attention to it, it has colour, sound, movement and music; think of the wholeness of it. The sound and movement of just drawing with charcoal exemplifies this.”*

Carmen recommends to students that they augment this learning experience by reading or rereading Warren’s text, as well as chapters by Martina Thomson²⁰⁹ and Sean McNiff,²¹⁰ arts therapists who have explored the phenomenon of the blank page as a therapeutic construct.



I raised my head from reading my notes and addressed the group.

‘I’m aware that a reading description of the workshop, it may sound fairly straightforward. However, it was certainly one that was identified as memorable among the graduates I interviewed

²⁰⁹ Martina Thomson, *On Art and Therapy: an Exploration* (London: Free Association Books, 1997)

²¹⁰ Sean McNiff, *Art as Medicine: Creating a Therapy of the Imagination* (New York: Shambhala Publications, 1993)

for this research project, not only for its ability to confront, but for its implicit consideration of the aesthetic and what that means. Carmen subsequently offered an extended version of this exercise in a Year 3 Studio Workshop – some of you may remember it - around learning to help clients to confront fears of emptiness, formlessness, and what those fears can mean, and how temporarily ‘filling them in’ with creative expression offers the possibility of transforming them into something more manageable.’

Marcus: *I do remember that workshop as I was in my Year 3 Practicum and working with homeless people at an agency in Prahran. That workshop really helped me through some of my practicum quandaries.’*

I nodded my understanding to Marcus, and again referred to my notes as I continued.

‘The next course for Year 1 students was Creative Arts Modality 1 – Therapeutic Use of Art and Music. It contained several interesting learning events and, from that wide array I’ve had to select just a few to use in the research. Here are a couple.’

Vignette III ~ Learning Event: Using Drums to discover therapeutic potential

Picture This...

It’s 9:30 AM on a Saturday morning and twenty-two Year 1 Students have gathered in the classroom for their first weekend of the ‘Music Modality’ – The Therapeutic Use of Music. Without waiting for instruction, they’ve pushed the tables to the sides of the room, stowed their backpacks and bags and are gathered expectantly in small groups around the room.

Jay: *‘Good Morning folks, and welcome to weekend one of the Music modality. For those who don’t know me, my name is Jay and I’ll be facilitating this workshop. Please grab a drum from the collection over here, or pull out the one you’ve brought with you. Find a space for yourself somewhere in the room, and get comfortable, facing in toward others – a kind of loose circle. I’m not going to say a lot at this point – only want to let you know that we’ll have plenty of time for talk later on but for now we’re going to make some music. Also, I’ve set up to record the sounds we make so we can play them back and listen to what we create. Hold your questions for the moment, and let’s just trust the process.’*

Students move to set themselves up as instructed and look expectantly toward Jay who is positioned with his Djembe at the ready.

Jay: *‘OK, so I’ll start and as you feel you want to, join in with me. Let’s see where it takes us.’* Jay begins a slow, basic rhythm on his drum – BOOM BOOM, CHA CHA CHA.

The students who are familiar with drumming join in almost immediately while others momentarily watch, studying, and then tentatively imitate J’s hand movements on their own drums. Pretty soon everyone is drumming using both hands in combinations. As they pick

up with it, Jay increases the pace, and alters the rhythm – BOOM, CHA CHA first in 3 and then in 6 – BOOM, CHA CHA, BOOM, CHA CHA. Within minutes, the room is alive with the sounds and the vibrations. Stiff and hesitating postures begin to unwind, as hands, arms, shoulders and torsos take up the lead rhythms. Some students continue to look at Jay in order to follow his lead, while others are drumming intensely, eyes closed and fully in tune with the moment. The music goes on for about 10 minutes then Jay calls out ‘CUT’ and the drumming stops.

‘Nice work’ he says looking around at the drummers. ‘How’re ya doing?’ Students nod and smile, and some reply with single words: ‘Great’ ‘Cool’ ‘Very good’ ‘Surprised’ as Jay gets up and moves to the audio recorder. ‘OK’ he says, ‘Take a minute to check in with your body – how does it feel, and what are you aware of in different parts of your body – hands, arms, shoulders and so on. What was it like for you to let loose on the drum? Just kind of reflect on the whole experience. And maybe consider whether we’ve changed the space at all, and if so, how? Feel free to get up and move around if you want to.’

At first the group is quiet, students looking down at their drums and thinking about what Jay has directed them to consider. After a couple of minutes, they begin to look at each other, smiling and passing a few comments into the centre of the room or to the person on either side of them. Jay moves over to the audio player and adjusts the tape.

Jay: ‘Alright, now let’s have a listen to what we made here.’

Fast forward to the last half-hour of the workshop when Jay is giving his feedback and observations about the learning events to the students.

Jay: *This is wrap-up time so as you listen to what I’m saying here, think about how it might translate into work with a client or client group. Drumming really gets the ‘bath water’ moving around but is also so ‘in the moment’ that giving you another opportunity to process what the experience was like is valuable. What worked well, I thought, was a combination of didactic and experiential learning whereby you could link together the vocabulary particular to a music therapy modality with the experience of it through rhythm, time and duration, timbre. My thinking is that if you don’t understand the vocabulary you aren’t going to understand the Arts Therapists’ insights into the use of materials/strategies. Also, what I felt worked well – and you all seemed to agree - was to record the drumming and rhythm activities and to play the sounds back, while you reflected on the experience using visual art materials. Drumming is an effective means for anyone to observe, both subjectively and objectively, dynamics and techniques, such as - leader, follower, offer, block, call and response, non-verbal communication, synergy, authentic impulse, solo -*

group, synchrony, and also issues like being heard-not being heard, permission to be loud and extravert. The Irish duets worked well wherein you each took turns assuming the role of client, therapist and observer, especially as I got you to do the activity on separate drums and on the same drum.”



Vignette IV ~ Learning Event: Intermodal Music Therapy with Multimodal Elements

Picture This...

Saturday morning 10:30 AM – weekend 2 of the Music Modality. The Year 1 Student group is working out of the Studio building. Musical and visual artists Vera and Sue Ellen are co-facilitating this weekend, and students have responded to their directive that today's workshop is multimodal – that is the students will be working with visual art materials and forms in conjunction with music. Improvisation is a key element to the learning in this workshop that is geared towards understanding creative process. Along with music and rhythm instruments, a few art materials and oddments, such as shells, candles, coloured string and yarn are on offer to whoever may wish to use them. We see musical improvisations in which art materials are being employed; some students are painting and some are drawing in conjunction with others who are making musical sounds. One student has set up an easel on the footpath in the sun and others 'dance' out to her space, interact bodily and rhythmically with her artwork, then 'dance' back into the studio. Students seem to be showing a keen interest in experimenting with various instruments, kinaesthetically exploring the studio space (floor, walls, overhead girders, vertical horizontal and diagonal lines). Energetic music and movement improvisation, including extemporaneous song and harmonising has developed spontaneously. The mood is one of obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm, a sense of freedom and pleasure is apparent on the faces of the students and the facilitators. There is no talking, only music and art-making; everyone creates their own space, sometimes individually, sometimes working in pairs or threes. These explorations into multimodal art continue for over two hours. After the lunch break, Vera and Sue Ellen provide the following comments and observations to the students, from their perspective as co-facilitators for this workshop.

Vera: The creative work you engaged with today was quite dynamic; the group became quite synchronistic as it moved from individual work to working in pairs and threes. The

discussion that followed this experiential, multimodal session has focused well on the relevance of this learning to therapeutic practice; about when, where, and how to offer these sorts of experiences to clients and patients. Some good insights have emerged about the therapeutic significance and potential of music, as it seems you have also discovered some things about yourselves, your creativity and your capacity to create with others.

Sue Ellen: *I think that what you all have done today is great, and I'd suggest that when you now approach the recommended texts on music therapy and art therapy, you'll be able to relate in some informed and personally knowledgeable ways to the theories they espouse.*

An Addendum to this was the student feedback that praised the use of the Studio space as very conducive to freedom of expression and experimentation. Several students requested to have all workshops and classes in the Studio.



I put my notes aside, and looked around for people's reactions and responses.

Miranda: *'These were the sorts of learning experiences that the program offered that I found to be just mind-boggling. Let's face it, you could never achieve that kind of understanding and awareness from simply reading theory or listening to a lecture.'*

Amos: *'True, but you could certainly come at theories with a much greater understanding of what was being discussed. And a personal grasp of the material because you could relate it to a lived experience.'*

Siobhan: *The students' comments about the Studio space certainly have that ring of truth about them. It reminds me that any design of a program should include a notation of the need of appropriate learning spaces. We all loved the Studio spaces when we were going through the program, no matter that they were in an old brick building with cement floors. Remember all the complaints the program got after our weekend classes in the Classroom about glitter and a bit of paint left on the carpet? It was ridiculous. But the university never did agree to our requests for a dedicated program space, even when we said we'd fix up that old storage garage next to the terrace houses where the program office was.*

'I agree with you, Siobhan.'" I said. *'As I'm sure would others. The classroom spaces we used in Bldg. XII were less than ideal for the kinds of learning the MCAT program offered, apart from complaints about our art materials. Even when we 'spilled out' into the hallways and stairwells, and onto the terrace at the end of the hall, there was always a sense of making do in what was clearly a traditional classroom setting that had to be put right before we ended on Sunday afternoons.'*

By now, it is midmorning, so we agree to break for coffee and fresh air time, and to continue in an hour. I thank the group for their various responses, noting how their contributions will help me with my analysis of the learning events.

Reflections & Commentary II ~ Stories that Teach

An area of MCAT education that particularly interested me was how best to facilitate learning about therapeutic relationships among the diverse cohorts of students who enrolled in any given year. As noted in an earlier discussion, my approach to the process of designing and adapting a comprehensive arts based curriculum was informed by, among other things, the view that all students, regardless of prior learning or professional orientation, had enrolled in the MCAT program for its eclectic dynamism. Therefore, I designed the course in therapeutic relationships and group dynamics to be arts based and story based, as well as to be framed by the humanistic psychotherapy theories and concepts espoused by Rogers, Spinelli, Yalom et al.

Drawing on the work of such author-practitioners as Coles, Bruner, Rodari, Yalom and Zipes, who write about their use of literature to teach, I set out a selection of imaginative literature, stories and poetry that could constitute one path toward understanding therapeutic relationships. This literary collection that I used for learning and teaching has in common the notion of what author Raymond Carver (1939-1988) called “fellow feeling.” I have great affinity with this term of Carver’s which I read as an articulation of our shared humanity, a sense that we are all in this life together, all trying to make sense of events that can seem haphazard, arbitrary, and at times, absurd and meaningless. This echoes Coles who in referring to his use of literature in both his teaching and his work as a psychiatrist, notes how literature reminds him of, “How complex, ironic, ambiguous and fateful this life can be, and that the conceptual categories I learned in psychiatry, in psychoanalysis, in social sciences seminars are not the only means by which one might view the world.”²¹¹ Coles also refers often to the doctor-poet, William Carlos Williams who worked among the poor and working class families in Paterson, New Jersey, and whose empathy for his patients was unequivocal and expressed with a purposeful clarity in his poetry.

As a therapist and teacher (of therapy), I have come to believe that our efforts in both areas ought to be about discovering the means by which, as fellow travellers, we might share the humour and pathos of our lived experience. Within that sharing, we may learn from each other, how to be open to our needs and desires, to be spontaneous without fear of failure or humiliation, and most importantly, to appreciate the supreme value of being able to laugh at ourselves. In keeping with that, I treasure the experiences I have had with clients and with students as, at different times, we have groped and stumbled on our way toward some ill-defined light or illumination. In my teaching I have used my own stories of these experiences, and been affirmed by students who respond both with interest and enthusiastic requests for more of them.

An array of authors provide literary stories and poems that I have found useful in teaching the concepts and practices of therapeutic relationships to CAT students; these include Margaret

²¹¹ Coles. *The Call of Stories*, xvii.

Atwood, Raymond Carver, Grace Paley, Tillie Olsen, and Alice Munro, the works of Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekov and Eudora Welty, to name just a few.
Student evaluation on the inclusion of imaginative literature as a learning tool was mixed with about a sixty to forty split in favour of it as beneficial.



Vignette V ~ A Conversation On Learning through Imaginative Literature

Picture This...

I am in conversation with MCAT graduates, Max and Serena about the fictional stories that formed part of the learning in the Year 1 course in therapeutic relationships. A few people are listening in as we sit together, discussing the choices of literature recommended and provided to the students, as well as a few examples of the literature that influenced my approaches to teaching. I begin.

'I'm interested to hear your views on being offered stories, poems and texts from literature as part of the recommended or required readings in the MCAT program.'

Max responded first. *'I'd have to say that in my early experience as a student of the program, I was struck with a couple of things about the literature connected with the courses in the program. The first was I was a bit bemused by the presence of fiction – stories that seemed to have no relationship with the course except that we were being asked to read them. And, second, that it was a bit of a battle to get us to engage with the stories and to understand their importance in framing an understanding of our future work as therapists because, as students, we were looking for that one theory that would tell us how to be therapists. Not only did we want the answers that only theory can provide (or so we'd been socialised to believe) we wanted THE answer on how to be a creative arts therapist. We wanted to be told – given the 10-step outline to success.'*

I nodded my understanding of what Max was getting at.

'The second point you raise, Max, was an ongoing issue for some students in the program, as you may well know. The expressed wish which was sometimes a demand, for theoretical strategies, along with the desire for counselling techniques. But that's for a different conversation. For what literature can offer as illumination of the therapeutic relationship, I often posited my view of what brings people to therapy as the need to be seen and heard, the wish to understand and be understood, which is what all of us seek, perhaps from moment to moment. The lack of such personal recognition and understanding, and the grief that

surrounds it is, I believe, at the bottom of what brings clients to therapy. I think it is also one of the motivations for us in becoming therapists.'

I continued. *'You may recall that I also explained in class my unswerving belief in the power of imaginative literature to illuminate human need and motivation in ways that are impossible to capture in a strictly theoretical textbook. So, for example, my choice of Carver's²¹² story, Cathedral as a learning tool in our exploration of therapeutic relationships is offered for the way that it sets out the transformation of the protagonist and, how as therapists, we might identify with this experience. The denouement that occurs in the scene when Bub the narrator has the experience with Robert, the blind guest, that shifts him away from his fear – of the blind man, of his wife, but mainly of himself – to a place of acceptance, perhaps even love in its broadest definition; this, in my view can lead a new arts therapist to understand the value of collaboration in the therapeutic construct.'*

'Yes,' Serena opined. 'It was wonderful to read how that change seems to begin when Bub admits that he can't tell Robert what a cathedral is, what it looks like. At that instant, Bub becomes Robert's equal because he is as limited or blind with words as Robert is with sight. But Robert, who has long ago learned not to be afraid, suggests another way to communicate the idea of cathedral. I was so moved at Carver's description of the two men joining hands.'

'So was I' Max said. 'And because Bub has now divested himself of his need to be 'the authority' he is able to try what Robert suggests and the two men engage with each other as equals, both with expertise, both with needs. I read it as a beautiful moment – and, I should add, an art based one because they are drawing together as one.'

'And do you recall what you each thought about the story's relevance to the course?' I asked.

Serena replied immediately. *'For me it was an illustration of eschewing the notion of therapist-as-expert, per the class discussion of the arts therapy approach as one that provides opportunities for an egalitarian therapeutic relationship. The story led me to think more widely about that.'*

'Yes, I'd agree' Max enjoined, 'and would add that I liked the idea of learning being a two way street, as it were – what you had talked about, Gerry, as the possibilities for both client and therapist to learn from each other.'

²¹² Carver, 196-214.

'That's right.' Serena said, and added, *'I remember many of the facilitators emphasising the importance of engaging with the recommended reading, as well as extend our reading into texts we might discover for ourselves.'*

'Yes, I replied. I think the two words that come to mind as you're talking, Serena, are 'risk' and 'read' – that the experiential learning was always somewhat risky for each student, and the importance of reading was something I was constantly reminding students of. I do know that many students thought we made too much of this aspect, often coming to class without having done the recommended reading. In any case, I recall wanting to emphasise the pleasure of reading these stories, as well as my certainty that so much could be learned about therapy from fiction. I didn't want to privilege that genre over theoretical texts but rather to draw equal importance in terms of resources. In some ways, it may be a metaphor for the potential learning to be found in all arts forms. And it mirrors the experiential arts based learning that formed such a strong component of the program.'

'Well, that came through loud and clear' Max said. *'When you introduced us to Coles'²¹³ first chapter in The Call of Stories where he talks about his experiences as a novice psychiatrist with two supervisors; one whose focus was strictly on theory, and the other who emphasised the importance of listening carefully to the patient's story.'*

'I love that chapter - Stories and Theories' I said. *'My own Masters thesis was built around Coles account of his experience with his first psychiatric patient, the example of which I extended to explore the place of fiction as a means of understanding women's madness. I am so taken with the story Coles' patient tells him – as well as feeling like I have walked the same path as he did in relation to his patient.'*

Serena looked slightly puzzled. *'Is that so? Because I had the sense that Carver's stories were among your favourites – perhaps because they were certainly mine. I thought Cathedral could have been written just for therapists to remind them not to assume that they know what's happening for any client until they actually want you to know. I was really drawn to his other story, "A Small Good Thing" – again that experience of being surprised to find that my assumptions about the characters were completely off the mark, which is a really important aspect of the therapeutic relationship – that needing to hear the whole story as the client is able to express it. And, of course, the story was simply enjoyable to read and talk about with others in the class. As we're talking I'm reminded of how I was affected by Tillie Olsen's story, "I Stand Here Ironing."²¹⁴ You read it aloud to us in one of*

²¹³ Coles, *The Call of Stories*, Chapter 1.

²¹⁴ Olsen, Chapter 1.

our classes. And, you suggested we might like to sketch or doodle as we listened. Afterward, we discussed the story, and then our experience of drawing in response. I remember it as a lovely experience all round, and it helped me to understand the concept of multimodal arts therapy.'

'I use that technique in my current work with children.' I said. *'It can have the combined effect of distancing and engagement simultaneously.'*

Max: *'As you know, I came from a social work background, and my undergraduate learning experiences were imbued with theoretical texts, so while I enjoyed the stories, I must confess to being relieved to find theory in the mix. I especially related to the Kaplan's text, "Art, Science and Art Therapy."'*

'Why that one in particular, Max?'

He thought for a moment then replied, *'Probably because its theoretical language was familiar – and because she writes so clearly about the marriage of those three things.'*

Serena countered with a different point of view. *'Well, I for one was rapt with the inclusion of fiction, and to find it used so directly as a learning tool. Frankly, I couldn't get enough of this approach. I'm sure you'd not be surprised, Gerry, to hear that I use imaginative literature in my practice, especially in aged care, where it is both a pleasure and a stimulus to clients' imaginations in creating their own stories.'*

'I'm not surprised, Serena, especially after the minor research project you did that focused on storytelling. It was a very good piece.'

'Look, I don't want to sound like a naysayer.' Max said. *'I did enjoy the use of stories in the learning. And many of the students produced some terrific imaginative pieces – remember Fanny's story of the duck? That was a ripper!'*

'No' he continued, *'I'm just saying that I'm socialised to search out theoretical texts as my primary source, so the story approach took me a little by surprise and a bit out of my comfort zone. As did much what we explored over three years, and I can't forget that because I use so much of it in my own professional practice.'*

Serena: *'I'm remembering that you quoted various authors, Gerry, and they were of one mind, you might say, on the importance of clinicians having literature as a resource. I remember that the idea sat well with me.'*

'I think Serena, you are recalling my references to Medical Humanists whose perspectives on the chaos and apparent meaninglessness of disease and disorder is enhanced by their literary and historical knowledge.'

‘So, the list of fiction that was included in the Suggested Readings was, as we’ve discussed with the Carver and Olsen stories, set out with intention and purpose.’

Max: *And we must not forget Tolstoy. I confess I was deeply affected by his story, “The Death of Ivan Illich.”*

‘Indeed, Max, hard not to be affected by any of the works of Tolstoy,’ I replied, ‘but that story has particular resonance for clinicians.’

‘And, if I might invoke a favourite author to summarise my intentions and purposes in this aspect of the MCAT learning, I’d refer to Annie Dillard who wrote, “Fiction can deal with all the world’s objects and ideas together, attending to those intimate concerns which the limited disciplines of thought either ignore or completely destroy by methodological caution.”’²¹⁵



Reflections and Commentary III ~ Therapeutic Relationships

A broad view of the MCAT program’s learning and teaching sees pedagogy that was both aesthetic and, to use Eisner’s²¹⁶ term, ‘field-focused.’ Its end point was always the application of learning to the practice of creative arts therapy, a practice, I should add, that included direct work with clients and research for the discipline. The education for both practical and theoretical understandings of creative arts therapy began with a twofold focus: following an exploration of the experience of art with its potential for transformation, students were offered a course that examined what it means to be a therapist; those qualities of helping and being a helper that shape what some call change-agent, others refer to as healer, but which regardless of title, denote empathy within the interpersonal relationship. The MCAT student was introduced to a process of exploring oneself as an artist and arts therapist and the developing sense of one’s professional self as an amalgamation of the two. In keeping with most therapeutic constructs, the MCAT program subscribed to the idea that, ‘relationship’ is at the heart of all therapy, regardless of what techniques or strategies are employed. Furthermore, that an understanding of self is essential to the understanding of others. Thus, comprehending the therapeutic relationship and how it could be fostered through the arts was a basic educational aim of the program. As I reflect back on the program, I must say that it was one I saw successfully realised repeatedly in courses, workshops, and fieldwork and in students’ final research projects.

²¹⁵ Annie Dillard. *Living by Fiction*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 12-13.

²¹⁶ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 62.

The ongoing learning to identify one's self as therapist and artist coalesced with an exploration of the relationship between creative expression and wellbeing; whether, indeed, human beings need to be involved with the arts, and if so, when, where, and how this need may be fostered and met. Students examined various approaches to the therapeutic use of art forms, distinguishing between process and product with emphasis on the former, attuning to a client's needs so as to know when and how to offer appropriate art forms that could enhance that client's capacity for sensory knowledge and expression, constructing therapy as an aesthetic collaboration and witnessing a client's non-discursive expression of meaning. Jones²¹⁷ refers to the therapeutic relationship as one of "client-therapist transactions" involving opinions, opportunities, and limitations, choices, actions and exchanges." This theory was prominent in the MCAT student learning, allowing as it does, for co-creative experimentation with the art and with the therapeutic processes.

In my view it is learning that offers an experience that is at once, cognitive, sensory and emotional with the potential to help the client effect desired change to, or amelioration of, a life situation. I would note that concepts such as these, that underpinned the student's learning throughout the program, seemed to take tangible shape within the practicum placement experience in Year 3, and to consolidate within the student's minor research project that marked the culmination of studies.



The next opportunity for talking about my research came when we reconvened in the shearing shed after tea. The reunion planners concluded their business, and I was again, invited to share some of my research work.

'I thought it important to include a learning vignette related to fieldwork' I said to the gathering, 'as it was a component of several of the courses. In Year 1, the first fieldwork assignment was set out as an individual exploration of Arnheim's quotation about art that, "What strikes the eye has a life-giving energy." The second one in semester 2 of Year 1, was a combined individual-group assignment that took students to the NGV Potter. There, you may recall, students were to explore, through the visual arts, the dynamics of group process; the exercise was a central part of learning how to deconstruct, if you will the experience of group process. That which really is about addressing the question of 'what just happened?' leading to an understanding 'what is actually going on here?'

Ken: *'If it's the one about the NGV, I'd like to hear how you've put it together. It was a process that had multiple layers and it was one of my favourites because it involved work at the Art Gallery.*

'That is the one, Ken.' I replied. 'And, you may remember that, as part of your assignment to write about the learning experiences, you submitted a set of postcards that you had written to your father.

²¹⁷ Jones, 178-79.

Your small group decided to use postcards and photos to articulate the final presentation of your learning. You gave me permission to use them in my research, so I have done just that. At this point, I'd be interested in your response and whether you think I've got your portrayal of this learning event to sound right. I would have been seeking an affirmation from you before I handed the thesis in for examination.



Vignette VI ~ Learning Event: Field Work Assignment for Group Process

Picture This...

One of the students is waiting to meet his learning group at the NGV in Melbourne's Fed Square where the students will undertake the fieldwork that has been assigned for the first year course in Therapeutic Relationships & Group Dynamics. While he waits in the atrium, he pens this postcard.

Postcard #1 Dear Dad, You've probably just finished the milking as I'm sitting here in Fed Square, nursing a cup of coffee and waiting for the NGV Gallery to open, so thought I'd drop you a line. Like always, when I talk with you, things get clearer in my mind. Anyhow, at the moment, it's a cold, rainy morning here in Melbourne and it will be good to get inside and spend some time with the art in the Aboriginal gallery. I'm here to meet the others who are part of my small group to work on this assignment for the Group Dynamics part of the course. This is the first time we've had Field Work – there was none in Semester 1 though I've been told we'll have more of it in the second year of the program. Anyhow, we've been in class together for one weekend this semester, discussing questions about what constituted a therapeutic relationship, and exploring how such a relationship might be achieved through arts mediums, (and extending on from the course in Arts Modality 1 – Music & Visual Art) our personal relationship to art mediums which is pretty interesting to think about, and I can already see how it's a thing that's going to keep coming up throughout this program. That and how we each think of ourselves as helpers, and so on. So, for this fieldwork assignment, this part of the course is offered as a way of coming to understand group dynamics by experiencing group dynamics. That part makes sense, but it'll be a challenge 'cause we have to find a way to choose one piece of art here in the Gallery out of our six individual choices and then work with that piece while simultaneously watching what's going on with

the group. I've chosen the Rover Thomas piece – you'd not be surprised 'cause you know how much I like Aboriginal Art. It's the one entitled 'Yari Country' which looks pretty simple at first, but the longer you stay with it, the more it reaches out and speaks to you and the more it has to say. I'm thinking too, that this is an important idea when you work as an arts therapist, because lots of people think they have no talent because they couldn't produce a piece like say Rembrandt, but if you can help them to see how they can express themselves with lines and forms, and have it mean something. I think that would be a real revelation for lots of people. I better go now, Dad. I'll get back to you later or tomorrow. Hope things are good with you and Mom and the other kids.

Love to you all, Ken

* * * * *

Postcard # 2 Dear Dad, As promised, here's a follow-up to tell you what happened for the rest of the morning at the NGV. It turned out to be much less stressful than I thought it might be. I was surprised by what others had seen and heard that I hadn't and, on the other hand, by what I had noticed that others hadn't. It wasn't completely easy and there were a few moments when, as a group we seemed a bit lost, and at times, a bit uncomfortable. But in the main, I thought it was actually fun, especially when we started walking through the art piece and sharing our 'sensory' impressions. We devised some pretty weird and funny stories, so at times it was a bit of a hoot. Part of our group dynamics was trying to stifle laughter, and keeping it down lest the guard ask us to leave! As for the course, I thought it was powerful learning; mind-bending and enjoyable at the same time, with so many layers, which I think, is what made it such a memorable experience. Clearly, it was an exercise in learning about group process by being in that process; we didn't know each other all that well, having only been together for one previous semester. As I think I told you, we were encouraged to notice things about the dynamics that transpired in the group – things like how the processes got facilitated, how we handled disagreements, if and how we included members who may have been inclined to hang back or remain silent and, not least, how we managed to agree on the one piece. Also, how (if) we gave feedback to each other, and what we did if we felt like walking away from the whole exercise, and so on. We discussed all of that and more, the next day in the class meeting. When our group presented our experiences to the large group that I had distinct flashes of understanding; the experience of being in a group and trying to find a way to accommodate each

person's preferences and views – what Gerry often referred to as making room for 'differentness' as well as the possibilities of engaging with art that's already made as a tool for arts therapy. But it was the direct experience of group processes that I'm certain enriched my reading of the recommended texts, both the specifics of Yalom's²¹⁸ material and the broader works on arts therapies in groups.



At this point I stopped reading and looked around at the group.

'So what do you think? Has my reconstruction of your postcards captured your essence as well as your learning experiences?'

Ken: 'Yes, I think so. I may have told you that my Dad saved all the cards and letters that I sent him while I was a student and gave them to me at graduation. It was great to reread them. But, in this course – therapeutic relationships - that we're talking about, you know there were so many layers to that one experience at the NGV, and so damn much to know about group dynamics, it would have been impossible to grab hold of it all in one day – or in one year! I still struggle to make sense of some of the group work that I do with clients and there are days when I really understand what you told us, Gerry about some therapists avoiding groups at all costs because its like opening a can of worms.'

Adrienne: 'Too right! But hey, back to the group dynamics in the NGV. You remember that part of the individual course assignment where we had to write a short vignette or poem about the experience. It was to be in the third person as though we were looking at ourselves from a distance, and it could be fictional or factual, or any combination thereof. In fact that was a standard component of all our individual assignments. When you interviewed me for your research project, Gerry, I told you to use any part of it if you still had it filed away somewhere. Did you find it?'

'I did Adrienne, and the content seemed a good illustration of some of the student learning experience, so I've included part of it in this section. Let me read it out to this group and, like Ken, you can let me know if it captures what you were writing about.'

Fieldwork Vignette

Picture This...

Standing for the second time in a week, in front of the piece of art that she'd selected, [Fiona Hall (b. 1953) *Paradisus Terrestris* Entitled, 1996 aluminium and tin (26.2 x 716 x 5 cm)] she wondered how this exercise was going to instruct her in the ways of group dynamics. All this is going to do, she thought, is create an argument between some of us, and a lot of silent resentment with the others who

²¹⁸ Irvin Yalom, *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy. Third Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

wouldn't feel strong enough to push for their piece to be chosen. She sighed and walked around the small gallery, returning to stand in front of 'her' piece. Why couldn't they have just given us a textbook to read – like every other university course did? God knows there were reams written on group dynamics; after all, it wasn't rocket science (there were probably reams written on that as well!) I don't know, she thought to herself, maybe I'm in the wrong program. But, I've paid my fees, and the deadline for withdrawing has passed. She looked at her watch, knowing she was procrastinating about meeting her group down in the lobby. Another sigh and a last look at her piece. They're never going to choose this one even though it really is wonderful! These beautiful little silver sardine cans sculpted into little tree shapes. She'd never seen anything like it nor would she have imagined such a piece. Looking at it opened her mind to all sorts of possibilities. She headed for the elevator.

As soon as she stepped into the central atrium, she spied the others gathered at the main desk. They were smiling and talking among themselves, looking for all the world like a small group of tourists. And I suppose that's what we are, she thought, tourists in this gallery and tourists in the creative arts therapy program we've all just enrolled in. As she walked up to the group, the other four students turned to greet her.

"Hi Adrienne. Glad you could make it today. We were just saying what a challenge this assignment is. What do you think?"

Challenge doesn't begin to describe it, she thought, but she smiled and returned the greetings, and replied to the query.

"Actually, I don't know what to think," she said. "But I guess we should get started, if we want to be finished by closing time." She was eager to find out how she would react to other's choices and how they would react to hers.



Adrienne: 'That was how I wrote about the first part of that learning experience. I was really confronted by it, but as I found out when we reconvened in class, so too was almost everyone else. Like what Ken wrote to his Dad, I remember being surprised by what others had seen and heard that I hadn't, and by what I had noticed that others hadn't. I'd want to add here, that writing a 3rd-person account of my learning experience was an interesting way to reflect and enlarge on the process. I got to look forward to doing it with each course assignment.'

Marcus: 'The fieldwork in the different course was something I enjoyed; it gave a real sense of independent learning and it put me in touch with the community in ways that I probably couldn't have done without the impetus from the program. That was especially true with the "Diversity in Practice" on in second year where we had to identify a client group and investigate it in detail. I don't normally like report-writing, but that one was a good experience.

'That idea of students investigating the community from an arts therapy perspective was the basis of that learning.' I said. *'Over the years, as well as providing some excellent reports, students*

made some very effective inroads expanding community awareness about creative arts therapy. I think the list of venues for practicum placements was enlarged through this heightened awareness. One of the many ways that students indirectly contributed to the enhancement of the MCAT program.

'Probably not the NGV.' Ken remarked, with a laugh. 'But, I have transferred this learning experience to my arts therapy practice, with some very good outcomes. I take clients to the Gallery to engage with the art, and whether it's an individual experience or one in small groups, they report something that very much embodies the Arnheim quote about what strikes the eye creating a life-giving energy to the viewer. And for many people, I've found that it demystifies art.'

Siobhan: 'I've done similar things, though I tend to take clients out to view 'street art.' But it has the same effect, I think, as well as creating that 'fellow-feeling' kind of connection between me and the client that establishes a genuine trusting relationship.'

Ben: 'As I think we all know, Trust is a big thing in this work, essential to doing anything meaningful with clients. I chose the topic for my last essay assignment in second year - for the course, Advanced Arts Therapy - because I was interested to reflect on how trust was developed between students and facilitators through the two years of learning, and what that meant for me in the role of arts therapy practitioner.'

'What did you conclude, Ben?' Siobhan asked.

'Well, I wrote about how trust was not just about trusting others, but about trusting myself, and that is a circular process, not a linear one. I thought that a significant element was the risk-taking that was involved in the creative processes we engaged in and especially in presenting these to our peers, and to teachers in the program. It almost didn't matter about being graded, at bottom was the whole experience of putting yourself out there with what you'd made, or were doing, and feeling that whatever the critique, it would not involve a judgement that would humiliate or undermine your efforts. Writing this essay helped me to understand the notion of the 'art as container' that we discussed in classes and workshops - and gets talked about in some of the texts - and to see how we were supported as students in our learning. It was a model for practice that I took into my practicum placement and definitely into my arts therapy practice.'

Ken: 'I'm not sure how that sort of thing could be defined in a program proposal, but Ben's comments suggest that it is essential.'

'If I could just respond,' I said. 'Your discussion has me reflecting on our approach to learning and teaching in the MCAT program. We didn't set 'trust' out in a learning plan, or even articulate a "How to establish Trust" strategy. I think it was a shared ethos among the facilitators; it was perhaps part of the arts therapy banner of Trust the Process, but in a much wider sense, it was the ethos of learning as discovery, the confidence that an environment that is both informed and supportive, allows people to find what they need to know. Our approach was underpinned by the existential, humanist ideas of therapists such as Rogers, Spinelli, and Yalom, and of educationists such as Eisner and Greene, with their commitment to aesthetic education.²¹⁹ I think it made for a kind of package with the implicit tag of 'Trust.'

²¹⁹ Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*; Ernesto Spinelli, *Demystifying Therapy*; Irvin Yalom, *The Yalom Reader*; Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*; Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*.

'However,' I continued, 'I learned so much from my exposure to art whilst working side by side with students in workshops and classes. One of my early insights was the way that engaging with creative arts allow anyone to say, "What if...." I sat in on a workshop that Jude was doing with students; she used an Arnheim visual experiment of placing a small square of cerulean blue paint on the centre of a white canvas, and then asked, "What do you see?" Does the blue sit forward of the white, or does it recede into the white?' This sort of learning experiment if you will, was repeated in endless different ways in the arts modalities workshops: What if.... you sing or use rhythm sticks in the stairwell of a multi-storied building? What if....you enact a dramatic scene, then do it again, back to front? In any of these examples, the next part of the question has to be, "What happens?"

Ken interrupted. *'And does 'what happens' he asked, gesturing in the air with quotation marks, 'alter or transform your sense of things, your view of sounds or paint or, for that matter, of yourself and therefore of the world around you?'*

'That's exactly right.' I smiled. *'That's what arts based learning and arts based therapy offers; the capacity to imagine things differently, different understandings, different connections, and to notice the world and myself in it differently - extended, enhanced. For the client, it may at first seem cavalier; seeing blue paint on white in more than one way is small beans to changing my life, but I've found that it doesn't take long for people to willingly apply the arts metaphor to the so-called bigger picture. Even to someone working in an arts medium observing, "I never thought of myself as creative until now."*

Tom: *'How many times did that happen for each of us as students. Like you Gerry, I've been overjoyed as an arts therapist when a client expresses that idea. It's like I think, "OK, now we're starting to move." When people say to me, "How do you know this art therapy stuff works?" and I'm speechless for a reply because it seems so clear.'*

Again, the group fell momentarily silent, apparently reflecting on what's been talked about the arts in both learning and practice.

It seems like a good time to remind you of one of the distinctive aspects of learning about therapeutic relationships in the MCAT program I said. I'm thinking about how we instituted the idea of arts therapy as 'An Offer.'

Dana: *I was there for the first workshop, when the concept was introduced, and it was really exciting. Such a simple yet profound idea. I'd like to hear it recalled, Gerry.*



Vignette VII ~ Learning Event: Therapy as an Offer

Picture This...

Students are gathered first thing on a Saturday morning and, having completed a warm up exercise, they are ready to begin. They had been asked to bring to this workshop a toy or object, which they feel they could use as a representation of what they bring to the learning event and are able to reflect on as something they are offering with prior knowledge and experience. The facilitator explains the content and rationale of the workshop. “The workshop will introduce and provide experiential opportunities for participants to become familiar with the concept of *The Offer* using creative media, imagination and play. Making offers, and taking up or not taking them up are important steps in engaging therapeutically with clients. This is learning that will also provide an opportunity to use reflection in action, that is, to notice how one is interacting, the choices one makes, and what is going on in the creative/learning spaces. The workshop will consist of two parts and students will be guided through each stage.” The facilitator then initiates Part One, Stage 1 by asking the students to place their objects in the centre of the circle and then, to notice the Milieu; all of the materials on hand, the space and other people in the room. This is followed by a discussion to identify important aspects of safety, containment and participation. Students are then invited to collect materials, and to use the entire Studio to make representations of who each of them is and what they have brought to this learning experience. It is suggested that they may express these by laying out, arranging and interacting with the objects and materials. This represents an aid to noticing what occurs during the learning event; the activity continues for about 45 minutes.

In Stage 2, the creative process is halted and participants are invited to reflect on what they have created, and to notice what others have created. Each person is given time to briefly speak about and/or enact something about their own representation. Students are then invited to interact with one another, with materials and with their representations, making impromptu offers and responses that entail elements of acceptance or rejection of the offer. The group is moved into Stage 3 in which each workshop participant returns to their own creative representation and, in their notebook, writes in one paragraph, a process note for what has occurred in the space. Students then arrange themselves in small groups and swap reflections, noticing how and what things might be altered to enhance or extend themselves through their representations. They then reconvene in one large group to discuss the overall

learning experience about the Offer; its meaning and the impact it has had on perceptions of therapeutic processes and relationships. The students break for lunch, and return for Part Two of the Workshop. Their involvement is facilitated through the same three stages, but this time without any props. Each student uses only one's self, in conjunction with voice, sound, movement, improvisation, and play. Guided by facilitation, the students move quite readily through the three stages; the level of creativity seems to have been extended through the sensory, improvisational and playful orientation of the work. The last hour is given over to Stage 3 and student reflections; subsequent discussion of their extended representations is clearly enthusiastic.

Student comments include that this experiential learning has assisted in the discovery of personal limits and boundaries and of challenging those; of further understanding of process, and of the importance of therapeutic space as the environment that supports the creative space; the centrality of play as a fundamental element of creative arts therapy. A significant feedback comment which is endorsed by the majority of the participants is about how enlightened they have become in conceptualising the arts therapy modalities as an Offer. This seems to have made important inroads to demystifying the therapist role as expert, and to posing a model of an egalitarian therapeutic relationship. This is particularly underscored by the process of being able to both accept and reject offers and to improvise responses with counter-offers, a process that, in itself, impressed students as full of creative potential.



Tom is the first to respond. *‘Dana was on the money - the idea was so simple but profound in that it made the arts therapy process seem so neat and so logical, and so disarming for both client and therapist.’*

Marcus: *I agree completely. It was a definite ‘aha’ moment for me! And in my practice, when I explain it to clients, in much the same way that Jude took us through the process as students, they seem so kind of relieved. It’s become my stock in trade.*

Zac: *‘It’s me the timekeeper breaking in again as I’m aware we’re approaching the dinner hour. I’d like to call ‘time’ and let this conversation resume of its own accord later on this evening. Also, to suggest we meet again in the morning, right here at 10 AM tomorrow. Agreed?’*

Nods of agreement together with people standing and gathering their belongings signalled the end of the afternoon, and for my part, the collection of some good material along with what I had shared with the group.

‘Just one other thing before you all disperse.’ I said. ‘Two actually as one is my thanks for your willingness to engage so attentively with my research. The other is that in the interests of time for tomorrow morning’s session, I thought I might make photocopies of some of the vignettes I’ve not yet shared with you, and leave them on the kitchen bench. If you’re interested, you can read them ahead of time and jot down comments to give me when we reconvene.’

Again, people nodded and murmured agreement as we left the shearing shed and headed back to the homestead.



Reflections and Commentary IV ~ Assignments, Fieldwork & Presentations

Within the MCAT program, assignments, fieldwork, and presentations of learning were significant elements of the student learning with opportunities for these to be either partially or fully arts based. (for a sample, see Appendix A8, part 3) Each course required the student to submit an individual essay or report, a learning log and to create a small group presentation. As with all the MCAT learning, these were underpinned by understandings of arts therapy practice wherein the graduates would find themselves needing to prepare and present professional reports and conference papers and workshops. Individual assignments were usually tripartite, formed by an essay that explored a relevant theoretical question, a brief (2-page) survey of the student’s learning experience written in third person format, and a learning log in which standard questions required short answers. Fieldwork Reports were as the term implies, and where fieldwork was a substantial feature of a course, students were permitted and encouraged to include their own creative and artistic elements as adjuncts to the standard format and presentation of a report.

The presentations were occasionally individual, but more often they were oriented to a collaborative learning model. Presentations were peer-reviewed in class, as well as including the presenting students’ written reviews of their creative process in formulating the presentation. Grading by the course facilitator was done on a standard program form, and post-presentation discussion was an important part of the review. Presentations were normally scheduled for the final Sunday morning of a given course; they were inevitably, arts based using either a single or a multimodal format that incorporated visual art, music, drama and storytelling. Each student group chose its preferred venue for presentation; depending on weather and the sorts of equipment and props that the group required, some took place outdoors at local parks.

In most presentations, there was a high level of creativity and the incorporation of theory was evident. This element of learning was meant as an integration of the creative arts experience, a retrospective look at what the students had learned whilst, within the same process, a forward look through modelling, to their arts therapy practice. Students worked diligently to convey a creative

representation of their learning in the given course, and the imaginative results spoke volumes to their efforts.



Vignette VIII ~ Year Learning Event: Storytelling Workshop

Picture This....

A Saturday morning in early April sees the beginning of the Arts Modality II course In Storytelling. The purpose of this first workshop is to explore the use of stories, storytelling and 'story listening' as therapeutic tools in working with individuals and groups of clients. Twenty Year 2 students are gathered in the large Classroom space, as pre-requested, they have arrived with costume materials with, especially a hat. Following a student-led warm up exercise we are now seated on the floor wearing our hats. I begin the first learning event by asking each student to respond to the question, "What does the Hat want to tell us?" The hats come alive with stories about their origins, how they were acquired by their current owners, why they're in their present shape, where they would prefer to be, and so on. Brief comments from the students seem to accord that the activity has awakened individual imaginations as well as transforming the space into a creative and playful one.

*Students then move to a longer activity; working in their Collaborative Learning groups, they are invited to make up a character, and a short story using one of the traditional opening lines found in fictional stories. These are: **Once upon a time...It was a dark and stormy night...It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...It is a truth universally acknowledged that....** Within one hour each small group is to assemble costumes and create a story to be shared in the large group. This collaborative creative process subsequently returns to the large classroom in a wild array of costumes. A couple of the groups bring along the props of small sets that they have devised. The four small groups are given 15 minutes each to tell and perform their story. The diversity of story lines is imaginative and interesting, and the presentations are entertaining. At the end of this activity, students are encouraged to take a few minutes to reflect on and note in their journals, the learning that has occurred for them in this workshop. Following the lunch break the workshop is used for interactive discussion; first in pairs or threes, then in the large group, students explore the use of stories, storytelling and 'story listening' as therapeutic tools in work with clients and client groups. The examination of stories includes a consideration of the use of other media for stories such as drama/theatre, music and dance; how performance alters a traditional storyline, and how one is affected as audience in the enactment of a story. In the last forty minutes of class time, students are invited to reflect on their learning, in particular to consider what specific techniques from their Drama therapy classes they employed in this workshop.*

Homework is to reflect on what 'home story' from childhood has been memorable and perhaps helped to shape you in your life. As a closing note to the students I remind them that we did not begin this workshop with a personal story, but instead used props and make

believe as distancing tools, and I ask them to reflect on what they see as the reasons for this approach. Does it reflect client work and if so, how?

Student Evaluation of this workshop indicated an increased understanding about the potential value of stories and storytelling as a therapeutic technique. A short exercise in ‘remaking’ known stories such as Little Red Riding Hood, (after Jack Zipes) and the playful use of fantasy (from Rodari) were seen as a comfortable means of introducing therapist and client to each other and ‘icebreakers’ into the wider therapy construct. The opportunity to author one’s story about self in a 3rd person format was experienced as a positive reiteration of its place in the overall MCAT program approach to learning.

The following day, my co-facilitator begins by asking students to consider the prime or first storytellers in Australia, the Aboriginal peoples, and I read a brief account of the Saltwater People’s arts based response to the desecration of their sacred totem in NE Arnhem Land. Students then move to their small groups; here they discuss important personal issues and to consider how one would respond to the violation of such an essential thing in one’s life, to make a story about this, using visual art and/or any other art form along with their verbal account. Rejoining the large group after an hour’s time, each group tells their story, placing the listening audience in whatever configuration suited their needs.

A review of the learning process highlighted the following: in the Sunday workshop, small groups spent a longer than expected time around the identification of their common sacred territory. The responses embraced a wide range of forms with varied complexity in aesthetic attempts at integrating artwork and conventional storytelling modes. Students noted that familiarity with an art form enabled a better engagement with material - something to be aware of in client work. In addition, it was noted that emotional engagement on the part of the storyteller seemed to evoke stronger engagement from the audience. Finally, there was difficulty for the audience in knowing where to focus when the art was separated from the story. An important reflective observation was that the process of identification might have been accelerated and deepened by a large group discussion around locating our historical European cultural sacred icons, and whether they are still present in our culture.



Vignette IX ~ Learning Event: Revisiting Ideas about Group Dynamics & Group Process.

Picture This....

In the last afternoon of a Year 2 Synthesis-of-Learning workshop, one of the students is sharing his thoughts with his fellow students, about an arts based learning event.

Jack: *‘One of the workshops in the Advanced Arts Therapy course stands out for me for a few reasons; it revisited and reiterated our earlier learning about group process, the art*

materials were limited, and it was multimodal. It's the one where we used art materials to explore our own group dynamics. We began by making figurative representations of ourselves using armature wire and plasticine. We then placed the figures on a large table surface at a place that would represent how we saw ourselves, in relation to our student group, when we first came into the program. We walked around the table and looked at the arrangement, then we were invited to move our figure according to how we each thought we were in relation to the group now, as we were coming to the end of our time as Grad Dip. Students in the program. It was so interesting to see the shifts, and the changed diorama provided a means of saying things about the intervening experiences that might have been much more difficult to identify and articulate, if we had been 'just talking.' Then we brought in some sound - rhythm and music to represent how we were hearing what we were looking at, then some paper and pastels to further extend the images on the table, and finally we did some movement in response to each other's images. As we processed the whole experience in a verbal discussion, a kind of renewed group cohesiveness emerged that many of us agreed would not have been possible without the multi-modal arts experience. The workshop also demonstrated how individuality could coexist with membership in a group.'



The start of day three of the weekend began with a conversation with MCAT graduates and facilitators over breakfast and coffee.

Ben: *'I enjoyed reading the two vignettes that you left for us, Gerry, and I probably have a few additional recollections from second year to add to the mix. Those would be related to the qual research course that I was so relieved to find was something that not only could I manage but that I enjoyed. I know many other students in my year were like me, intimidated by the thought of a research course. So, when we started out the weekend in that first class, examining the qualities of a collection of objects that you had set up, like a still life image in the centre of the room, I remember thinking to myself, "Well, if this is research, roll on!"'*

Miranda: *'Too right, Ben. That and the research course assignment that had that big arts based component. For me it was yet another 'aha' moment in my program.'*

Tom: *'I think I said to you in the interview for your project, that I couldn't imagine another university teaching research in this way. It was great, even though it took me most of the course to believe that qualitative research wasn't just a soft option. I'm from a family of scientists,' Tom said, turning to some of the others, 'so you can imagine what I'd been taught about so-called 'real' research. It was great to have Eisner's text to point to when the need arose but, more importantly, as a clear articulation of qualitative research.'*

Siobhan: *‘And let’s not forget some very good texts and articles on arts based research written by the arts therapists. Altogether, the readings for this course were excellent, though I’d have to say, I did miss being able to take myself into literature as required reading.’*

‘Unfortunately, Siobhan, the MCAT program had closed by the time I located a quite substantial body of work on fiction as research. But that said,’ I continued, ‘My own learning about qual and arts based research was greatly expanded through coordinating the course and sourcing the readings for it. Probably even more so from the creative research pieces that students presented as part of their course assignments. Those were truly wonderful.’

Stacey: *‘I was grateful for my experiences in the course when I got to my third year, both for the practicum but especially for the minor research project.*

‘Some of the Year 3 learning experiences are what I’d like to talk about with you all this morning’ I said. ‘I think Allan scheduled us to meet in just over an hour. I’m going for a walk around the dam. See you shortly.’



Reflections and Commentary V ~ Practicum Placement Learning

As noted in earlier discussions, the field of Creative Arts Therapy emphasises the value of creativity, play, humour, and the imagination as sources of wellbeing and learning. Those of us in the MCAT program who educated and supervised students embraced models of aesthetic and experiential education. Greene refers to the idea of aesthetic as, “The intentional undertaking to nurture and appreciate reflective, cultural participatory engagement with the arts by [among other things] enabling learners to notice what there is to be noticed.”²²⁰ In the MCAT lexicon, the term ‘experiential’ denoted direct experiences with arts forms (visual art, music, drama and storytelling) as one means of learning the art and craft of creative arts therapy.

An important premise underpinning the MCAT program was that creative arts therapy is potentially, both a therapeutic and educative in that the common core goal is the development of an individual (or community). Further, such development encompasses all aspects of human experience, including the cognitive, emotional, spiritual, perceptual and imaginative. Creative Arts Therapy provides an intersection of these aspects through an aesthetic experience, (for both the client and the therapist), in which imagination is recognised and embraced as a magnificent tool. The program frequently referred to the work of Eisner who denotes imagination as “that form of thinking that engenders images of the possible” as well as providing “a safety net for experiment

²²⁰ Greene, *Variations on a Blue Guitar*, 87.

and rehearsal.”²²¹ These elements, images of the possible, experimentation and rehearsal, form the basis for the expression and representation that lie at the heart of the creative arts therapies. For, to be of use, the creative arts therapy experience must provide a means for the client to transform their situation, whatever it may be, into some more manageable form. Eisner posits that, “Representation is first aimed at transforming the contents of consciousness, [it] stabilizes an idea or image in a material or durable form (a painting, musical score, poem, etc.) and makes possible a dialogue with it”²²² – to wit, experimentation and rehearsal that leads to possibilities for communication on the part of the client to, and with, his or her world. Therapy, like education is, (to paraphrase Eisner), a process of *learning how to become the architect of one’s own experience*, that is learning how to create one’s self and one’s life by expanding consciousness, shaping disposition, satisfying the quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture.

Accordingly, the MCAT program’s emphasises on experiential learning in which the student experiments with, and rehearses, ideas images and ways of seeing, hearing, moving, and feeling extended to the Practicum Placement learning phase. Supervision and Studio Workshops were sources of supportive learning and encouragement of students to continue all of this experimentation and rehearsal. As with all learning in the program, the premise was that by to expanding and enhancing his or her own imagination, the student could become an imaginative and informed guide, inspirer, and witness. What some have called a ‘midwife’ for the therapeutic activity of creative expression with clients of all ages.

Those students who chose to continue on to the Master level - Year 3 of the MCAT program have generally identified this stage of the learning as the most interesting, challenging and rewarding. As noted earlier, supervised learning took place throughout the year in Practicum Placements augmented by fortnightly Studio Workshops and Research Seminars in semester one, and the Minor Research Project in semester two. Also included was a Colloquium Presentation of the student’s research process, in between semesters one and two.

The Practicum Placement experience was most often approached by students with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. The excitement was at the prospect of putting their learning into practice, the trepidation was the fear of somehow doing it wrong and thereby, affecting their client’s life badly. Those fears and concerns, expressed in some fashion by all students who traversed the MCAT program, were mitigated somewhat by the presence of a supportive supervisor, and regularly scheduled peer group supervision sessions. In addition, the Studio Workshops that were

²²¹ Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, 5.

²²² Ibid, 6.

scheduled fortnightly, were purposely set out as a place for students to bring situations from Practicum to be explored with their peer group and a facilitator. Such explorations took the form of multimodal re-enactments and role-play, followed by discussions. Students were encouraged to bring in their success stories as well as their difficulties, benefitting from a review of the former to identify what comprised the apparent success. Students were able to choose from a list of venues for their practicum placement learning and could divide the experience between two venues if they could arrange a schedule to do so.



As we gathered again in the old shearing shed, several of the group expressed their pleasure at this weekend's opportunities to revisit their MCAT experiences.

Ben: *'For me, the chance to take part in this MCAT review has strengthened my belief in the work I'm doing with asylum seekers in Melbourne. I've enjoyed making the connections between my student experiences and my professional practice, so I'm very interested to hear more about practicum placements and concurrent experiences in the Studio.'*

Siobhan: *'One interesting thing about my year 3 experiences was the group dynamics. In some sense we formed a new group because at the same time that some of us were continuing on with colleagues from our first two years, we were joined by students who had left the program with a grad dip and were returning after a couple or three years absence. So there was a tension between those who were ready to move onto into this new learning experience, and those who seemed to want to recreate the dynamics of the previous year's experiences.'*

Miranda: *'I was one of those who'd taken some time away from the program, and it was curious to come into an already formed group. However, I wasn't the only one, otherwise I may have felt like a true interloper. I think the studio facilitators and the supervisors were clearly aware of these factors and supported positive group dynamics. My experience was that we were able to make use of each other's wisdom in both the peer group supervision and in the studio workshops. It was also good learning for working with client groups where a new member may join a group that has been working for some time.'*

Siobhan: *'The Practicum was the coming together of everything. I know this because I've heard it from so many other people who went through the program, and it certainly was true for me. I could sense myself developing as a professional, and when we came together in groups, I was aware of how we were able to give and receive critical feedback. I think the fact that each of us was expected to facilitate an experiential studio session and to lead the interactive discussion that followed, contributed significantly to our becoming therapists.'*

Tom: *'I agree. For my part, the studio workshops were a really fine mix of student-led and facilitator-led experiential work and the weave (there's that tapestry again!) made for some rich learning. They also contained the great mix that was MCAT - play, humour, imagination, art and learning. I'm remembering one particular workshop that was about professional boundaries.'*

Something we'd talked about a lot in classes in the first two years. Boundaries was an issue that became immediate and tangible when we got into practicum, at least it felt that way for me. Others nodded and Tom continued.

*'I'm thinking about the studio workshop where this came up with Donna facilitating, and before doing any role-plays, she brought out different coloured string and tape and invited us to use the material to create real boundaries. One person took the ball of string and tied herself in knots as a way of showing how she was feeling in her practicum situation. Her metaphor was like shining a spotlight on **everyone's** practicum experience! Someone else expressed fear of not having strong enough boundaries in her client work, but when she changed the place and colour of the string and tape, it allowed her to see where she was at and where she needed to go. Simply altering the image gave her a profound insight.*

Marcus: 'Those studio workshops were a great learning resource. I recall thinking - another of those 'aha' moments - that this was where we could take risks without being reckless. It was like showing up fortnightly for rehearsal; I couldn't have done the practicum without the studios.'

'Shifting the focus slightly, what about practicum supervision?' I asked, putting my question to everyone. 'How was that as a feature of your learning?'

Ben: 'Once I got over my concern that my supervisor would be looking over my shoulder, and ticking off a list of things I needed to show I could do, it was great. Ultimately, of course, I found that supervision was something I couldn't have done without.'

Miranda: 'Establishing the supervisory relationship was not unlike learning to establish a therapeutic relationship - a kind of mirror of one to the other.

Siobhan: 'Yes, and having access to that one on one time to discuss difficulties was invaluable as a student. Sometimes, in my practicum, I just felt completely confused, so much so that I wouldn't have been able to bring the situation to the studios or the peer group. So, being able to unbundle it with a trusted supervisor was priceless.'

Tom: And, the peer supervision groups, facilitated by various supervisors, were a wonderful addition to my learning experiences in practicum. I remember labelling those as "the story hour" and really looking forward to them because there were so many great stories that got told, and we could laugh at ourselves. Some of them had us rolling off our chairs!'

Dana: Well, you were probably one of the best of the storytellers, Tom, and still are, come to that. I agree with you, though; the peer supervision group meetings were a fantastic piece of the practicum learning picture. I think they provided a kind of comic relief from the tensions of practicum. We couldn't help trying to be perfect and do things perfectly - to not affect our clients in a negative way. As much as we were reassured that we would not, it was hard not to fear it. Hence the uproarious stories at our peer supervision sessions. Along with serious discussions, I should add. It was a good mix.

'It is grand to hear your thoughts and reminiscences' I said. 'There are so many wonderful examples and stories from Student Placements, some that I witnessed and others I've listened to. Let me share a couple with you.'

Vignette X ~ Learning Event: In a Practicum Placement.

Picture This....

The MCAT student is meeting her client group at the women's shelter; this is her third session, working with a group whose membership fluctuates according to who is in residence on the Wednesday of each week. Today there are six women gathered and interested to see that the student has brought art materials; these include modelling clay, pastels and sheets of art paper of different sizes. She has also brought some bottles of different coloured inks, and is demonstrating how these can be used. She puts a few drops of ink, first on a sheet of dry paper and then on a wet one and lets the women watch as it 'bleeds' a pattern into the paper. One of the women suddenly puts her hand to her mouth and gasps. "Oh my word," she exclaims. "that is amazing! Can I do that?" "Of course you can" the student replies and gestures for the woman to select the ink she would like to use. The others in the group are similarly invited to take up the materials of their choice. The client who has expressed such a profound interest in the inks, positions herself next to the student at the large round table and works silently and intensely with the ink and paper. After about half an hour, she lifts her head from her work, looks around at the group and says in a low voice. "I've never done anything beautiful in my whole life, but this," and she points to her work, "makes me feel almost beautiful myself." She looks apologetically at the student, then quickly lowers her head as if she had spoken out of turn. A moment's silence, and then the other women smile and applaud. One says, "Well you hang onto that my girl, that's precious" while another just says, "On ya." The ink artist smiles shyly and adds, "I can't wait to show this to my daughter."

In a follow-up discussion with her supervisor and in her peer supervision group, the student recounts the events; what she has made of them and the fact that she feels ok to have not said or done anything beyond witnessing the client's experience, and the group's response to it. She shares her observation that this was a supreme example of the concept of 'art as therapy' *It really is the art*, she says to her supervisor. *I could see how the woman's sense of herself was transformed by her own creativity.* The supervisor replies, "I think you have just been part of 'Trusting the Process'".



Vignette XI ~ Learning Event: In a Practicum Placement Peer Supervision Group

Picture This....

One of the students is talking to her peer supervision group and her supervisor who is facilitating the meeting. She recounts the following tale.

I'd like to follow up on a practicum situation that I shared early on and got some advice on and tell you about how it played out. For those who weren't in the group, I'll just quickly retell the first part of it.

I was in the early days of my practicum placement. This girl - we were at a local high school to work with so-called 'problem' girls - said to me, out of the blue, mind you, within the first twenty minutes - we're still setting up the room, and she says, 'Sometimes I feel like killing myself.' My immediate reaction was, 'Oh my gawd, now what do I do?' straight into panic mode. Then I consoled myself that I was working with a mental health nurse who was right there with me, so she could take care of that sort of problem.

Anyhow, I brought this little story back to supervision, and Gerry, you said, 'What if you were to ask her if she'd like the group to make a play about that?' My first response was, 'Wouldn't that be trivialising her feelings?' and you said, 'Not if you really believe in the arts as therapy. Imagine what you as an actor and improvisation expert could do with that raw material; help her to create alternative scenarios, and instead of the usual anxious responses that would have her rushed off to a psych hospital, you'd be offering her something fresh and positive even whilst acknowledging her apparent dilemma. Offer and counter offer/offer and counter offer.

On reflection it was so good and so much about what I had come to this program for. So, now I'm here to tell you the rest of the story. I went to the next session and offered, in a general way so as not to single out the girl, some ways that drama could be used to respond to difficult thoughts and feelings that are scary and unacceptable to talk about with most people. It was brilliant, really. It allowed me to work co-creatively with all the girls, rather than having to act like some kind of 'expert' on how she or they should act and live their lives. It allowed us establish a real therapeutic relationship, to use humour and laughter which are really key elements in my work (both as a therapist and as an actor), and for the girls to act out all kind of things which they then affirmed they couldn't talk about directly either at home or in school. And, they got right into the drama, directing it and playing out some very imaginative scenarios. It really affirmed the arts therapies for me and taught me

to believe in myself as a creative arts therapist - amazing how a single experience can have such a lasting impact. Transformative.

Oh, and at the end of our six-week project, as we're wrapping up, the same girl says to me, "You know, I really love this shit." "Oh yeah?" I said. And she says, "Yeah, all that talking stuff, you know, you just go round in circles, but this – this really gets right down to it!"

'How's that for evidence of the 'it works' like we're always getting asked for?'



Tom: *'Those are a couple of beaut examples of practicum work. They just show the kinds of things that lead to us becoming the practitioners we are today. I'm sure there are any number of others you could cite, Gerry.'*

Siobhan: *Those are the good ones. We can probably all remember ones that didn't go as well as hoped, or where, as students, we didn't get to work with our preferred client groups.*

'There are plenty of those, Siobhan. I replied. 'I'm not trying to hide the fact, rather there is only so much time and space to describe them. As to the second part of your comment, I'm reminded of a student who wanted to work with mums and babies, with an established dance therapist as her supervisor. Unfortunately the supervisor was on study leave, and our student settled for working with clients in aged care and with dementia - at the other end of the lifespan, if you will. However, in her practicum report, the student waxed lyrical about how much she had learned, and the unexpected pleasures of working with this client group. As it happened, this student devised some very good arts therapeutic approaches. So, sometimes things worked out well in the long run.

Marcus: *'Third year was such a huge learning experience - if I can even call it in the singular. For, even as we were deep into the Practicum, we were attending the seminars for our research proposals. It's true they were linked, but it felt like keeping so many balls in the air.*

Tom: *'What's that famous one-line response to multiple compliments: "But can he juggle?" I know what you mean, Marcus, but the program got us through in one piece.'*

'No' I countered. 'the program gave the necessary guidance and support, but to give credit where it's due, you got yourselves through. Your knowledge, your talent, and your commitment was there in spades. At least that's how I saw it.'

Miranda: *I think it's important to remember that our year 3 of the program was not a slog. We had some exceptional learning experiences both in practicum and in doing the arts based research. In both of those, I was involved with people in my community and they were wonderful times. The mural that my client group did is still in place, and I smile whenever I pass it.*

Ben: *'For me, some of the best learning took place in the Practicum Supervision conversations where I felt I could be really forthright with my uncertainties and my hesitations. I recall one in*

particular that really turned me around. But, even as I think about it, what turned me around was the experiences with the clients.

Vignette XII ~ Learning Event: Practicum Supervision Conversation (Is this therapy?)

Picture This...

Ben: I've begun to think about how I have tried too hard to direct things with my clients – to make something happen that I can call “therapy.” I've been working with these two young teenage people, and I see how when I've been trying to make something happen, it's been for me, to make me feel useful. And yet, the more I let go, the more I'm able to pay attention to them. With the boy, I followed his lead, working his memorial piece (to his brother who was killed in a pub fight) as he cut it with a jigsaw. The only time I was directive was when he was thinking about using a certain kind of paint, and I knew it wouldn't come up well on the surface of the material he was using. He took my suggestion quite naturally – it seemed so because we were working together on this project even though it was his. But I ask myself, “Is this therapy?”

Supervisor: ‘Is it? It certainly seems therapeutic, what you are doing with the boy’

Ben: ‘But we're not addressing any of the issues about his feelings about his brother's death.’

S: ‘Aren't you? How can you be so sure? Sounds like you are establishing trust, and at the same time, you are helping him to express his feelings through his art piece – even if he is not articulating that process as such.’

Ben: ‘I guess we have to do it the hard way – this learning to be an arts therapist. If we didn't start by trying to direct the action and the course, we wouldn't recognise the act of letting go and ‘trusting the process’. And, come to think of it, a wonderful thing happened with the girl – I didn't realise the full weight of it until I reflected on it later. You know I have started working alongside the clients rather than just sitting and watching them as they work. Anyhow, I was sketching a portrait of ‘B’ while she was doing some art work with pastels. So, when she looked up and asked what I was doing, I said that I had done a sketch of her, and held it up for her to see. “Ah, that doesn't look much like me” she said. At that point I held out the charcoal and paper to her and said, “Would you like to do one of me?” She turned back to her own work and said, “We're not going back to that old stuff are we?!” For a second I was taken aback and then I wanted to laugh.’ (Laughing now along with Supervisor).

S: ‘Oh Ben, our clients and patients always teach us what we need to know. Sounds like a wonderful affirmation of her relationship with you.’

Ben: ‘Yes it was- when I reflected on what she had just offered me. So much to learn.’



Reflections and Commentary VI ~ The Minor Research Project

The following are examples of arts based research that students produced as minor research projects over the life of the program. The list is far from complete.

- A student explored her fears about contracting breast cancer as a person at high risk through creating exciting, highly coloured ceramic images. Through the 'language' of the clay, she learned surprising aspects about herself, beyond her identified fears, and about working, in previously untried ways, with her medium.
- A student explored the potential connection of creating art in a natural environment with his sense of wellbeing. He confirmed the connection, and in the process, learned many things about creating works in the bush and by the sea. His art work displayed unexpected images generated by these environments, and he learned new aspects about the languages of the environments, both gentle and harsh, and about what it means to create art in isolation.
- A student began with a literature review, examining the meanings given by a few authors to the dialogue between the queen and the mirror in the fairytale, *Snow White*. Her research took her into creative 'storying' of her relationships, and she discovered some interesting and unexpected ideas about 'frames' in the context of women's lives. Whilst involved in the research, she experienced an irresistible urge to paint. Her discoveries about colours as they represented herself and her own mother were surprising and gratifying, and translated into techniques for professional practice.
- A student undertook a literature review of the use of Creative Arts Therapy with survivors of political torture. Before beginning her research, she intuitively moved to protect herself, through the use of collage and art constructions, from the impact of the images described by victims. And then, somewhat to her amazement she found, in the literature, that torture survivors nominate art materials in their essence and predictability, as providing a similar protection in their journey toward rehabilitation.
- A student, a brilliant visual artist, wished to explore the concept and reality of therapeutic space. She proposed the use of an heuristic framework, but after several weeks of frustrating work arrived at a place of despair borne of trying to articulate the research process. On the verge of giving up the project entirely, I encouraged her to 'go back to' her art. She did, beginning with the unplanned binding of sticks and twigs, and onward...and completed a magnificent project. She created art for the purpose of making meaning of her research question, and ultimately expressed the experience of the research process symbolically as well. And while she has included written text the works speak for themselves.

A significant component of this learning was a presentation of the minor research project at the annual MCAT Colloquium, an event that was the highlight of the academic year. It was a final consolidation to the student's learning, one that took place in a generous and supportive atmosphere. As program coordinator, I convened the Colloquium which was attended by fellow students from all levels of the program, the teaching staff, and by invited guests. Each student presented a synopsis of their research project together with the creative work that was linked or

central to it. Students in the earlier years inevitably commented favorably on the opportunity to see and hear the presentations, using words like, inspiring, beautiful, thought-provoking, and so on. Student presenters reported the experience as affirming of their research efforts, both process and product, by virtue of hearing themselves talk about it. The positive responses from colleagues was seen as a bonus.



Vignette XIII ~ A Teaching Event: What was my lived experience of teaching Creative Arts Therapy in the MCAT program?

Picture This....

A group of former MCAT facilitators are gathered for pre-dinner drinks on the homestead verandah, where they are talking about what it was like to teach in the program. Some, as noted earlier, were of that group of graduates who returned to teach in the program, while others had come from other programs, in Australia and overseas.

F1: In the main, I found the experience to be an enriching one. Students' discussion in class, their questions and the material they came up with on assignments expanded my thinking about my own creative processes and my practice.

F2: For me, the student presentations were especially thought-provoking as well as quite inspiring. The extent of students' imaginations was often quite incredible. I enjoyed my role as a practicum supervisor; it kept me on my toes with practice issues, and caused me to think about some aspects that I hadn't considered in the past.

F3: When I first came into the program to teach, I thought that it perhaps lacked the rigour that I had been used to in my own training. However, the longer I was in it, the more I could see that it was a different approach to learning, one that was premised on learning-as-discovery if you will, rather than information-based with strategies.

F1: Or tied to a particular theory. I liked the idea of offering students experience and then allowing them, with guidance, to discover the theoretical links that made most sense to themselves.

F3: There were times when facilitating the learning was an unexpected challenge, when there was clear and present resistance to what was being offered. But, I learned to go with that instead of resisting back and saw the creative process as a metaphor for that kind of teaching. I'm a visual artist, and I know that if you fight with the materials you go nowhere. So it was very much a 'Trust the Process' though it took me a few challenges to get to that place.

F4: *I was most challenged by the students who pushed for authoritative teaching - that 'you tell me what I'm supposed to know 'cause I don't have time for this self-directed learning stuff.' Those, as you'd know, were also the students who had the most difficulty engaging with the art forms, with play, with taking risks in creative representations, you name it. I know there were some who left the program because of our teaching approach, but many stayed, maybe thinking if they kept pushing we'd accommodate their demands.*

F2: *I'd have to say that in all my years of working in the program, I was truly inspired by what the students did and said, in classes and on paper, and like you, the fantastically imaginative presentations they created for the various assignments. I don't wish to sound like a 'pollyanna' but the negatives were inconsequential when looked at next to what the program offered to students and accomplished in its graduates. I think Martin's vision was well and truly realised, and Gerry's too if it comes to that.*

At that moment, the dinner bell signalled for us to move inside - a nice place to adjourn the conversation.



The following morning we gathered for one last meeting of this weekend. Marcus again took the role of 'Chair' and opened the discussion.

Marcus: *Before we adjourn and go our separate ways, I'd like to say how much I've enjoyed this mini-review of our student experiences. As well as conjuring up some great memories, it has alerted me to some practice areas that I'd forgotten.*

Siobhan: *I agree with you, Marcus, and for me, it's also given me something to think about for my current arts therapy teaching.'*

Me: *Perhaps this would be a good time to share some comments sent to me by Lisa O'Beirne who couldn't join us this weekend, but has kindly agreed to allow me to quote her. As some of you may know, Lisa was in the first cohort of students, and she is the first MCAT graduate to complete a PhD. Like many of the people I interviewed, Lisa makes some cogent statements about learning as a student in the program, as well as about her transition to professional practice. Her comments incorporate her own PhD research of a creative drama project with clients with a mental illness. She kindly shared the following thoughts that seem to fit nicely with all we've been talking about in these gatherings.*

Lisa: *'I am reminded of 'trusting the process' in my student years, reading that students in the later years also learnt to deal with ambiguity. The existentialist quandary of how much we try to control, or leave open to growth as therapists requires an ability or willingness to trust. As I see it, learning in such a manner lead to practicing in this manner, a group member in my study talked about a sense of his trust being repaired through our pantomime project.*

I have not needed to 'teach' clients how to learn about themselves, as you did not 'teach' us by instructional means, 'how' to be arts-therapists, the process evolved from engaging in our own exploration to sharing that with others, as ourselves. Clients grew to express themselves more freely and to enjoy sharing their artistic endeavours with others, learning about themselves in the process.

Many times I have felt daunted, and equally awed, by the ineffable experience of engaging with clients... different perceptions of the same world magnified by psychiatric conditions and extreme existential angst of being held for indeterminable periods in detention, no less. In such hostile environments of the mind or of society, there was no use pretending that art would change their lives without the fundamental circumstances of their health or freedom being addressed also. However, I do believe that on at least one occasion, I prevented an individual slipping into a state of 'madness', through writing a song with them that we sang over and over, which was later recorded for them to play on cassette to calm themselves down. In this case, maybe I enhanced their ability to cope with their life as it was. I think Madness is ineffable, so, being able to sit with it was crucial to me feeling like I could act in this situation.

The change from learning to being... a therapist was gradual, it took time and tuning into to ways of approaching work. It also loops back to affirm or review ideas.

While a 'music therapy' course would have required me to practice x amount of skills developed by other practitioners, your course provided the opportunity to tune into unique ways of engaging with art and others, that doesn't have to 'measure up' to an 'expert' way of doing it... I think that this is a progressive approach to learning that is also consciousness building, which is life changing rather than half-awake mimicking.'



Tom: *Couldn't have said it better myself! Those comments capture a lot of what we are all about as creative arts therapists, and what we experienced as MCAT students. I agree that this has been a terrific weekend in all kinds of ways. I'm looking forward to reading your thesis when it's complete, Gerry.*

Me: *Well, I just want to thank you all so much, for your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences. It has been such a pleasure to be among you once again. I will keep you apprised of my progress and will let you know when the study is complete and becomes available electronically.*

And so, this narrative comes to a close. There are many MCAT stories still to be told – and will be.



Chapter 6

Findings and Interpretations

*How we come to endow experience with meaning, which is the question that preoccupies the poet and the storyteller.*²²³

6. Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the outcomes of my exploration of experiences of arts based learning in the MCAT program. It identifies qualities and themes that attached to both the learning experiences of students and those that were revealed through my retrospective review of the approach to learning and teaching in the MCAT program. This chapter also explicates the qualities and themes that were part of my arts based project, the fictional portrayal of MCAT participants' experiences in the program. The discussion extends into my interpretations of the meanings the qualities and themes of arts based learning for the students in their development as Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) practitioners, as well as for the MCAT teachers; these derive from both aspects of the study.

Eisner notes that one of the features that makes a study qualitative is its interpretive character. He gives two meanings to the word, *interpretive* and these are: "Firstly the inquirers try to *account for* what they have given an *account of* and secondly, *interpretation* pertains to what the experience holds for those in the situation studied."²²⁴ Eisner's guideline of *interpretation* was useful as I formulated this discussion.

My research has found that MCAT participants perceived of, and experienced arts based learning as having certain qualities, although, in the main, they have not used the precise word, *qualities*, to identify them. Hence, this discussion is of qualities that I, as the researcher, identify as the markings of arts based learning explicated through my research process.

From the outset, the primary interpretive frames that I put around the experiences that I was studying were of the arts in education, and the arts as therapy. I was primarily interested in the experience of arts based learning relative to the concept of *art as therapy*: to discern how it was experienced and what it meant for the students.

²²³ Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, 12.

²²⁴ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 35.

In that sense, this inquiry into learning (and teaching) creative arts therapy maybe viewed through two lenses: the wide-angle lens of program participants' experiences, and the narrower lens of my experiences as MCAT program coordinator. The end of the study also brings me to the realisation that one of the aspects I was tacitly exploring was whether what was being taught was the same as what was being learned. As the following discussions suggest, my overall interpretation seems to confirm that this was (mostly) the case, confirmed through accounts of the practicum placement experiences and constructions of the minor research projects that are set out in The Arts Based Project (Chapter 5). This is discussed in detail later in Section 6.3 of this chapter.

In his article on the trustworthiness of educational stories, Barone notes that, "Several prominent narrative researchers have suggested caution in trusting stories for reasons that have not occurred to more traditional educational research methodologists." and he goes on to delineate reasons for this caution as that, "They tend to record unmediated experienced phenomena in a superficial manner. For some critics, the superficiality of stories composed in the vernacular bespeaks a lack of penetrating scholarship. Narrative accounts unaccompanied by scholarly analysis are viewed as incapable of advancing knowledge about educational matters."²²⁵ However Barone contends that educational stories can, "achieve a degree of critical significance" and he maintains that,

Just as discourse partaking of a critical science format and patois can promote emancipatory moments, so can story genres (biography, autobiography, literary journalism, and the novel) that are derived from literary forms and that honor the norms of everyday speech. I further argue that if educational stories are to reach maturity as a form of educational research, some of the most insightful among them must be left, at least momentarily, unaccompanied by critique or theory.²²⁶

One of the interpretive frames that I put around the experiences that I was studying related, as previously mentioned, to the application of arts based learning to practice, whilst another relates to the pervasive element of story making and storytelling.

Section 6.1 identifies the qualities that emerged from this study of the experiences of arts based learning in the MCAT program. Section 6.2 discusses the essential themes that arose from my examination of arts based learning in the MCAT program. Section 6.3 is an analysis of my arts based research project; the processes around fictionalising accounts MCAT participants' experiences from the data I collected and reviewed. Section 6.4 provides a brief narrative of my

²²⁵ Barone, *Persuasive writings*, 64.

²²⁶ Ibid, 65.

research process, including the unexpected directions and cues the research provided and the subsequent findings that resulted from following those cues.

6.1 Memorable Qualities and Processes in MCAT Arts based Learning

As I reviewed my findings, I was struck with the ways that particular learning events were identified by MCAT participants as memorable (itself a quality of learning) as well as the general agreement that arts based learning experiences tended to heighten self-awareness and self-understanding. There was almost unanimous accord that the foundational learning that constituted years 1 & 2 of the program was directly applicable to the practicum placement experiences in year 3 and from there, on into minor research projects. (See Section 4.1.2 and 4.1.3) MCAT participants identified those learning experiences that derived from the arts based workshops in which discussions had related that learning with concepts of arts therapy constructs and thus formed a synthesis in approaching creative arts therapy practice. I interpret this as congruence in the learning that made these experiences memorable. These were the tangible representations of the *aha* experiences that students frequently referred to. I should note here that in the interviews, most spoke informally, of the ways that their learning had direct application to their professional practice work with clients, as well as for their personal lives. These then may be regarded as broad qualities within which may be found specific qualities that could be seen as attaching to the individual student's developmental learning as a Creative Arts Therapist.

Eisner writes about *epistemic seeing* which he says is, "knowledge through sight, but which invokes all the senses and the qualities to which they are sensitive."²²⁷ Itself a quality of learning, epistemic seeing is an apt term for an important aspect of arts based learning in the MCAT program. It seems to me that Eisner's term is definitive in the concept of art as knowledge, that one can achieve understandings through creative processes. The following discussion enlarges on this idea, and delineates some of the qualities of arts based learning that were uncovered through this inquiry.

6.1.1 Learning experiences were Paradoxical

MCAT participants referred to arts based learning that was paradoxical in that the arts seem to refer to both sides of an argument simultaneously. Words such as challenging, exciting, trustworthy and confronting were among those that were commonly used to describe learning experiences. It was risky and safe; students pointed to their willingness to take risks within a creative learning process because they felt secure that their efforts would not be negatively judged. At the same time, they

²²⁷ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 68.

were encouraged to make judgements about process; how the event had evolved and what it contained. Students emphatically identified trust in the student-teacher relationship as important and very much present in the MCAT program. Its presence engendered a mutual respect that allowed them to take risks in their learning, to critique their own and their colleagues' presentations as means of drawing closer to informed professional practices. The idea of there being no right or wrong in a creative process but rather seeing it as a source of experimentation and discovery, including about the so-called rights and wrongs of one's approach to living, offered a certain freedom within the metaphorical container of an art form. As some students remarked, the learning was, at times, cognitively, mind-bending, and physically nerve-wracking, but ultimately self-affirming.

6.1.2 Learning experiences were Improvisational

Improvisation was a prime process and quality that was identified. Learning (and teaching) that is improvisational carries inherent qualities such as freedom, experimentation, exploration, creativity, imagination, risk-taking. Both students and teachers spoke of improvisation in their learning experiences, and of the MCAT program's capacity for those qualities of improvisation that contributed to the individual appropriation of learning even whilst collaborating with others in the learning experiences.

6.1.3 Learning experiences were Spontaneous, Humorous and Playful

Playfulness and humour and spontaneity were identified as important features of arts based learning experiences and were seen as congruent with theoretical premises. Taken together, they suggested artistic play as serious work that challenged students to conceptualise these as positive factors in the appropriation of knowledge and skill. Engagement in and with the arts seemed to evoke (again, paradoxically) a playfulness and humour (as for example in the Drumming workshop) whilst potentially engendering a sense of feeling confronted and potentially inadequate to the task (as, for example, in the Blank Page workshop). Aligning or making sense all these learning stimuli with came to be understood as a kind of mirroring the experience of a client when first offered an arts therapy experience. Notably, many students referred to the arts therapy texts such as those of dramatherapist, Bob Landy and art therapist, Mala Betensky as helping them to secure these alignments.

6.1.4 Learning experiences were Collaborative and Process-focused

Collaboration with peers was facilitator directed in classes and workshops, and for some of the learning assessments. Student comments on this aspect of the learning ranged from frustrating to enjoyable with various permutations in between. Many acknowledged that the facilitator-directed collaborations assisted them in their grasp of group process, and in their efforts to understand (Yalom's) theories of group dynamics. Understanding the concept and the actuality of process was noted as essential to creative arts therapy process and students affirmed that the aspect of creativity in arts based learning assisted in the achievement of that understanding.

6.1.5 Learning experiences were Imaginative

The ways in which the learning was both offered and undertaken was identified by many as imaginative and of the imagination. The design of workshops and assessments was seen to be embedded in imaginative constructs that called for equally imaginative creative responses. Student presentations, both planned and unplanned versions were imbued with individual and collective imagination, in their particular features and in their specified relationships to CAT theories and practices. This extended into arts therapy practice in which a client's imagination may be released, first through working in and with the arts mediums, and then toward imagining and enacting different life possibilities.

6.1.6 Learning experiences were Sensory: Colourful, Musical, Dramatic, Kinaesthetic - Multimodal

As the MCAT program was predicated on a multimodal construct, it followed that the learning would contain, and focus on, sensory as well as cognitive learning. The art forms imbued the learning with images, sounds, enactments and movement. It also put those together in multimodal configurations so that learning events and student expressions and performances might encompass several at any one time. I think of opera as an analogy with its incorporation of images, music, theatre, colour and movement. Thus, at any point in their learning, students would have used these or like words to describe their experiences in and of it.

As I reflected on these qualities of arts based learning in the MCAT curriculum, I was reminded of the elements of experiential learning, as written about by Boud, Usher and others in the field of education, and their particular application to learning in the MCAT program. The qualities that have been illuminated and the processes that engender them are congruent with the values that the MCAT program held in its education of prospective creative arts therapists. They are incorporated in the discussion of themes that follows.

6.2 Themes

Eisner defines a theme as like a pervasive quality and he says that, “Pervasive qualities tend to permeate and unify situations and objects.”²²⁸ I found that trying to capture the pervasive qualities of the arts based learning experiences and events under thematic headings was a somewhat difficult exercise. However, van Manen’s writing on differentiation between essential and incidental themes was helpful. He notes that, “In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is.”²²⁹ Using this premise, I deduced that one essential theme of MCAT arts based learning was that it was active, expressive, (story-based) learning, for as discussed below, without elements of active expression, the learning would have been relegated to a passive, receptive paradigm. Most if not all the qualities that were identified by MCAT participants as features of their learning would have become nonexistent. A second essential theme I have identified was arts based learning’s direct application to creative arts therapy practice framed by concepts and practices of *art as therapy*, again without which, such learning would have been superfluous.

The following discussion is an explication of these two essential themes that permeated and unified the arts based learning in the MCAT program. The imagined conversations and learning vignettes, together with my review of the MCAT program and its approach to learning indicated that these essential themes framed the MCAT experience.

6.2.1 Learning was Active and Expressive

MCAT arts based learning was learning that was active and expressively story-based. As noted in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study, the learning was grounded in and shaped by stories. There were the students’ own stories that reflected their various processes of achieving understandings of the arts as therapeutic and oneself as a creative arts therapist. These reflected attainment of both conceptual and practical knowledge. There were the teaching stories that that were offered to students, literary and theory-based stories as well as stories of personal practice; examples and samples of broad human interactions and specific therapeutic exchanges. There were the stories of practicum placement events that were reconstructed and reshaped and re-enacted with the guidance and support of peers and facilitators in the Advanced Studio workshops. In addition, there was the non-discursive storytelling presentation that was an ongoing feature of arts based learning. It took

²²⁸ Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye*, 104.

²²⁹ van Manen, 107.

various expressive forms according to, on the one hand, the specifics of the learning event and, on the other, the student's choice of expressive story form. These expressive activities lead to the students' individual reflections of concepts and practices and growing recognition of themselves as artists and arts therapists. In my view, reflective learning and reflective practice may be seen to mirror each other, and are expressed through stories of events, reflexive contemplation and subsequent retelling of the event but with additional knowledge and insight. A circular process that, as previously noted, is unending as long as the aim is increased knowledge and understanding of human events. Hence, reflection may be seen as an incidental theme, though not less important.

6.2.2 Learning was Applicable to Practice

Active experiential learning put the concept of *art as therapy* into practice. The practice opportunities provided by arts based experiences in the learning process were highlighted by students and teachers in the program. Overall, this learning mode, which put experience ahead of students' encounters with theory, was seen as an important way to illuminate theories and to foster understandings of them, as well as to nurture role development as creative arts therapists.

MCAT participants were enthusiastic in their discussion of this intersection of theory and practice. They spoke of how a learning process that initially seemed linear proved to be circular over the course of the program, building on itself as they increased their understanding of CAT practice. Within the learning event and starting with an active engagement with an art form, then reflecting on how that engagement took place, sensorially, cognitively, and emotionally, they saw the importance of the questions this process raised. Questions such as, 'What was happening in my body my mind and my psyche whilst I was in the creative process?' 'What occurred for me in the process of presenting and sharing my creative work, and in having it witnessed?' 'How has my understanding of my world been altered by this process and what then do I want to do with this new knowledge?' Similarly, 'What have I learned (how am I changed) by witnessing others go through a similar process?' 'How has the learning advanced my understanding of how the experience might be felt by a client? And, the not insignificant question, 'What have I learned about the art form; the medium and the materials?' All of these questions are applicable to creative arts therapy practice, making them doubly important as learning tools. I believe they are exemplars of epistemic seeing.

6.2.3 Incidental Themes

In keeping with van Manen's paradigm, incidental themes included that arts based learning was inventive (improvisational) and experimental (rehearsal). It embraced the notion of personal agency in that students had freedom to follow their own learning path. It was collaborative and somewhat

discretionary (invitational). The reconstructed conversations and learning vignettes indicated that the important elements of learning creative arts therapy were conveyed to students and appropriated by them in their progress toward graduation and professional practice. To wit, what mattered to those of us implementing curriculum really did matter for student learning.

6.3 Findings from the research process of fictionalising the data

About half way through my career as coordinator of the RMIT-MCAT program, I recall being struck with the thought that, the struggle with art, both creating it and engaging with it, is a metaphor for the struggle with life. Extending that idea into arts based education, it seemed logical to consider ponder how the challenges involved in learning can be represented in a creative process. In the process of identifying the qualities of arts based learning it seems to me that one implicitly identifies the qualities of creativity and vice versa.

I've reflected further on these ideas as I worked through my various struggles to create the imaginative reconstructions that comprise the arts based project of this study, recalling among other things, Eisner's advice that qualitative research is like a collage; the researcher artist makes in-process decisions about how and where to place the pieces based on the cues that the process provides. The cues that my creative process provided were to be found in the juxtaposition of stories, my recollections of learning and teaching events in which I was directly involved, and contemplation of the experiential knowledge and, not insignificantly, the gaps in that knowledge that I brought with me to my role as program coordinator.

Early in the research process, I found that as part of my creative process I reached a similar conclusion as that of Irvin Yalom who describes what he calls his slow but inexorable conversion to storytelling as a means of conveying meanings about his practice of psychotherapy.²³⁰ Yalom writes of his decision to give the story centre stage in his book, *Love's Executioner* based on his psychotherapy case notes. He comments on his plan that the stories should be organic; "They should evolve as they were being written, thus having one foot in fact, another in fiction."²³¹ Yalom concludes his description with this thought: "Ultimately I understood I could not just give lip service to the idea that literature could convey powerful, otherwise inexpressible thoughts: I had to pack all I wanted to say within the narrative and save nothing for a separate pedagogical

²³⁰ Irvin Yalom, *The Yalom Reader: Selections from the Work of a Master Therapist and Storyteller*. (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 340.

²³¹ Ibid, 342.

overview.”²³² For the purposes of this inquiry, I did save some aspects for a ‘pedagogical overview’ as evidenced by this chapter. However, that choice does not, in my view, diminish the creative arts based project’s capacity to explicate and convey pedagogical knowledge. This knowledge is discussed in My Conclusions (Chapter 7).

6.4 Answering the Research Questions

What follows is a return to the research questions that underpinned the inquiry with my brief response to those questions:

6.4.1 *How was arts based learning and teaching experienced by participants of the RMIT-MCAT program?*

The short answer is that students describe their experiences as a positive and life-changing. Longer answers are contained in the arts based project. Through the imagined conversations and through some of the vignettes, MCAT participants describe their experiences as were generally positive with some qualifying statements to the effect that there were times of not being sure what one had learned, feeling out of one’s depth. However, these moments of uncertainty seemed to dissipate with the Practicum Placement experience in Year 3.

6.4.2 *How may these experiences be portrayed in a creative literary form?*

Through imagined conversations and a series of learning vignettes, experiences that depict arts based learning were imaginatively reconstructed.

6.4.3 *What are the qualities of arts based learning in the MCAT program?*

The qualities of arts based learning were identified through the text of the thesis and to some extent, through the discussion of the program in The Context (Chapter 4). I discovered that I could not point to qualities without also discussing the processes of arts based learning.

6.4.4 *What is revealed in a (fictional) portrayal of the MCAT educational experiences?*

The fictional portrayal revealed the variety of ways in which MCAT participants made sense out of the arts based aspects of their learning in their overall pursuit of CAT knowledge and practice. The imagined conversation and the learning vignettes highlighted the ways in which some features of the learning were immediately useful, together with those aspects that were ambiguous or doubtful.

²³² Ibid, 343.

It underscored the consolidation of learning that took place in the Practicum Placements phase of learning in year 3 of the MCAT program.

6.4.5 *What is involved in the process of arts based research?*

What was involved was a creative challenge that took in all aspects of artistic struggle. One of these challenges is exemplified through Barone's reference to *The Grapes of Wrath*. He comments that, "This novel's power to persuade emerges not from within a rhetoric of theory, whether scientific, philosophical or critical. It emanates from a careful and committed empiricism that is made manifest through such features of writing as powerfully "thick" description and invented but convincing dialogue."²³³ My efforts to compose and write 'invented but convincing dialogue' has been a key creative challenge in this research project, one that has in itself, required my considerable investigation into, and practice with, creative writing.

6.4.6 *How do the arts contribute to learning?*

I surmise that the arts contribute to learning by enhancing and enlarging learning processes; expanding the imagination, invoking sensory knowing and enhancing the learners sense of self as capable and creative. This is true for both dedicated learning situations and for therapeutic contexts.

6.5 *At the intersection of art, arts based education and creative arts therapy*

As I mused on the idea of an intersection of art, arts based education and creative arts therapy I found that in the point of convergence, there is a set of congruent values that apply equally to all three. Prime among these are the essential challenges, risks, and struggle with creative and imaginative process for outcomes with the potential to enhance and enrich the life of the participants.

Summary

This chapter has discussed my findings from this study and my interpretation of those findings along with the ways in which its aims have been realised by a review of each of the original research questions. The following chapter sets out a discussion of my Conclusions of the inquiry. Within this chapter, I posit the relationship of the MCAT educational qualities and processes to the wider fields of CAT education and practices of arts therapy. I include suggestions for future research together with some of the limitations of this study.

²³³ Barone, *Aesthetics*, 197.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Implications for Teaching, Practice and Research

*Here we have the house full of music. It is made out of musical bricks, musical stones. Its walls, due to the percussion of small hammers, produce all possible tones. I know that there is a C sharp over the couch. The clearest F sharp is under the window. The floor is entirely in B flat major, an exciting tone. There is an amazing atonal serial electronic door. It is just enough to touch them with one's finger to produce an entire piece on the manner of Nono-Berio-Maderna. But I am not solely concerned with a house. There is an entire musical country with a piano house, a bell house, a bassoon house. It is an orchestra village. In the evening the inhabitants organize a beautiful concert from their houses before they go to bed...At night when they are all asleep, a prisoner plays on the bars of his cell...Now the story has begun.*²³⁴

7. Introduction

The conclusions of a project seem to me to complete the research circle, taking the study back to where it all began and thus drawing it to a close. To revisit the stated aims and evaluate how or if they have been achieved, the conclusion is also a kind of “So what?” point in a study. So what has this all been about? What has it uncovered? I reflect that the answers to these questions are multi-variant, pointing to personal and professional enhancement of knowledge and understanding.

The salient features of my deliberations within this study were the experiences of learning and establishing a sense of self through engaging in creative process, of participation in imaginative learning, and of articulating the ways that such engagement exemplifies the transformative potential of the arts. Put slightly differently, I wanted to understand what happens when, in a learning process, one engages with art forms, how imaginative participation in and with the arts changes one's outlook on self and self-in-the-world. These processes were, as this study has found, what the essence of the educational experience of MCAT students in the RMIT program was largely all about. They are also, in my view (and that of others writing in the field) what the arts therapy experience is about.

The study was also an expression of my desire to explore direct engagement of arts based research, and for this I chose a process of fictionalising the data, imaginatively reconstructing accounts of the MCAT arts based learning events and experiences. My aims in this regard were to effect a portrayal of arts based learning experiences, that is to show rather than simply tell about it, and to extend my

²³⁴Rodari, 3.

knowledge and proficiency with processes of arts based research. As a researcher, my experience of imaginative participation and engaging with an art form that constitutes part of this study has expanded my understanding of what happens within that process. Both aspects of the study have increased my knowledge and my appreciation of the experience of learning, if not of the ineffable and mysterious aspects of it. In concluding the study, I realise that it has, by implication, explored the transformative potential of the arts in education.

In a finite or delimited sense, I also sought to uncover the essence of what it was that we, the teachers, the students, and I, were effecting within the MCAT educational processes; how it was that we created, or more accurately, co-created, a learning environment that engendered both practical and philosophical knowledge, as well as that sense of “fellow feeling” that tended to pervade throughout the program.

As a part of closing the research circle, I return here, briefly, to my first reference (section 1.2) to van Manen’s observations; the tendency of educational researchers to object to the possibility of understanding learning experiences and then making such understanding pedagogically relevant. I read this work as his critique of the idea that objective and measurable knowledge is the only source of useful information. In my earlier reference, I noted that this study carried with it a phenomenological essence. van Manen’s notion of “depthful understanding”²³⁵ and its attendant themes assist me in articulating what the study has allowed me to achieve. Thus, its conclusions of the examination of arts based education for creative arts therapy students fall, like its findings, on the side of discernment and situational perceptiveness, to use van Manen’s words, rather than with instrumental knowledge and necessarily useful techniques. These comments hark to those of Barone and Eisner who note, “Truth is not owned simply by propositional discourse; it is also owned by those activities that yield meanings that may be ineffable, ultimately, but nevertheless ring true in the competent percipient.”²³⁶

7.1 Implications for Educating Creative Arts Therapists

I anticipated that an exploration of arts based learning experiences and events had the potential to fill a significant gap in the extant literature on learning and teaching for the practice of creative arts therapy. This study has looked at the experiences embedded in the education creative arts therapy students, in the context of an arts based learning approach that is reflective of, and applicable to, professional practice. The study has illuminated the ‘knowledge-field’ that MCAT program

²³⁵ van Manen, 156.

²³⁶ Barone and Eisner, *Arts based research*, 6.

constructed for creative arts therapy education. It has attempted to discern the attendant qualities and meanings within those experiences. The findings have revealed aspects and perspectives of learning and teaching that have the potential to shape and enhance arts therapy education and to extend therapy practices. I am of the view that arts therapy learning and practice, teaching and supervision are intertwined elements, such that the effects of one reverberate onto the other. The research has highlighted the MCAT program's pedagogic congruency, those events and experiences of arts based learning that point to the broader potentialities of engaging with the arts in both learning and therapy. Responses to interview questions, as well as a review of student course evaluations have enabled me, as researcher, to compose word pictures of learning and teaching experiences, to give shape and substance to what was an ongoing creative process of teaching and learning whilst the MCAT program was operational. The research process has affirmed the program's distinctive approach to learning, as it prepared therapists for professional practice, and has gone some way to discerning the meanings of MCAT participants' arts based learning.

7.2 The Action of Arts Based Research

As anticipated, undertaking the study provided me an opportunity to experiment directly with arts based research. The process of imaginative reconstruction, of composing narratives into an imaginative text was not only a process for elucidating pedagogy, it was one that provided me, the researcher, with learning that extended beyond the simple gathering of data into a creative process, which might be called 'research as art.' Barrett notes that, "An important function of the exegesis [is] in answering the crucial question 'What did the studio process reveal that could not have been revealed by any other mode of enquiry?'"²³⁷ My reply to that question is, I think that the studio, or creative process of imaginative reconstruction has given voice to the experiences of MCAT participants, and personalised descriptions of learning events in such a way as to allow the reader a feeling of being present within the stories. I would point to Learning Vignette III, Using Drums to discover therapeutic potential as a prime example of the ways in which the reader could be present at the experiences of sounds and kinesthetic within that learning event. Thus it is a study that takes the percipient into the topic, as contrasted to the distancing effect of objective research. The reader is offered a sense of relationship with the participants. As noted in the review of authors writing on fictionalising research, that sense of presence taps into the imagination and can foster an empathy that is not forthcoming in an encounter with an objective or impersonal study or text.

²³⁷ Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as research: Approaches to Creative Arts* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co., 2010), 162.

On reflection, I see that the impetus for this undertaking originated, in part, with my supervision of students' learning within their minor research projects. My experiences of supervisory dialogues with each student about his or her arts based research project were combined learning teaching ones for me as well as for them. From there I concluded that any investigation of the MCAT experience would, necessarily, include an arts based component. The outcome of this arts based research process, as noted in the previous chapter, has been to expand my understanding of the research approach and to enhance my capacity to articulate its potential and its benefits. My appreciation of the arts as sources of knowledge has been heightened. In the main, the study has led me down new and interesting pathways as well as to a contextualisation of ideas and works that I had previously set aside.

7.3 Implications for Future Research

The importance of research to the field of creative arts therapy cannot be overestimated. To qualify as a profession, especially in today's world that subscribes so strongly to 'evidence-based practice' the ability to point to a body of research around both education and practice is essential. This study has concluded that the education of arts therapists through arts based approaches has powerful benefits. The study has demonstrated the mirroring effect of arts based learning to arts based therapy practices; each reflects and affects the other.

7.3.1 Research for an Education-Practice paradigm

The application of education to practice warrants a direct examination. An action research project in which educators and arts therapy practitioners collaborate to look directly at the confluence of education-practice issues would, I believe be a major contribution to both aspects of the field.

7.3.2 The Creative Arts Therapist as Social Change Agent

In my view, one shortcoming in the MCAT education process was related to a consideration of the arts therapies as advocates for social change and social justice. As the program coordinator, I saw this as an area that had great potential given that arts therapists work with a wide spectrum of client populations, and do so in ways that can be outside the traditions of health and education practices. There is some interesting work being done by artists who take drama, music, art and dance into areas of social difficulty, to say nothing of war zones. I was aware of the importance of this area; students in practicum placements with particularly vulnerable clients often reported their own sense of frustration at not knowing how to effect the necessary changes (social, political and/or legal contexts) either on behalf of their clients, or assisting the client to take action. Practicum

supervisors worked to help students with individual situations, but it seemed to me that it was an area that had great potential were it to be more widely integrated into the arts therapy curriculum. Small examples that may have whetted the appetites of some MCAT students were their introduction to the work of dramatherapist, Augusto Boal who worked in the slums of Brazil, and to play therapist, Ann Cattanach whose work was with abused children. I would have like to create a course that looked at the role of the creative arts therapist as a community advocate. A research project that looked at the place of the arts therapies relative to social issues could take the field into important realms of practice and community significance. It is one I would like to pursue.

7.4 Implications for Using Creative Arts Therapy Educational Practice

Further research into the place of the arts in the education of arts therapists could explicate knowledge about the place of the arts in adult education. I found that the literature on learning in and through the arts was, for the most part, geared toward the education of children. I propose that the potential for exciting approaches to adult education may be found in incorporating the arts into, dare I say, any curriculum. Most especially though, would be in adult education with indigenous peoples and among refugees from different cultures and with different language bases. On concluding this study, I would want to say that it has illuminated aspects of experience, my own and those of other MCAT participants, that satisfy my personal perspectives as an educator and as a therapist.

7.5 Epilogue

Before I drew up a proposal for this study, I had been intrigued by students' comments that their experiences in the MCAT program had been *life-changing*. This was the term that was consistently used as a kind of encapsulation of the learning experiences and, as I have noted elsewhere, this thesis may be read, in part, as an attempt to examine what was meant by that phrase. Graduates were able to identify the changes that had occurred for them: they now saw themselves differently in the world, or they looked at the world differently, noticed things they had not noticed previously, or they understood the idea of *helping* in different ways, the *being with* not *doing for* the client or patient, or how their personal or professional lives had changed and were being lived more to their satisfaction.

What was harder to define was *how* these things had come about? MCAT participants described the tangible elements of the learning experiences: the enjoyment of hands on experiences with materials or the mediums, the collaboration with peers and teachers, and later with clients, in making art or art forms, devising the performance aspects of learning. But, most seemed to agree

that there was an ineffable quality about the learning experiences that resulted in changed lives and altered perspectives. What was it, I wondered? How to explain that *aha* quality that had emanated from the MCAT experience? Was it the opportunity to learn by non-discursive means of expression? Was it learning to let go of certainty, of coming to appreciate questions as much or more so than answers? Was it opening up to one's imagination through creative expression and through engaging with the creativity of others? Was it the freedom to play as part of the learning and the focus on creative process? Was it the experience of witnessing and being witnessed that meant being attended to in a fully present manner? Indeed, was it the experience of being fully present with another person, trying to attune with all of one's senses? Was it the collaborative learning, that process of seeking and finding consensus without total agreement and the respectful exchange of ideas that the collaborative process engendered? Was it coming to understand paradox and ambiguity that the arts offer to those who learn to notice, to pay attention?

At one point during my time as the MCAT program coordinator, I wrote in a conference paper that I thought the MCAT program was *subversive*, and that creative arts therapy is a subversive practice. The program subverted the conventional norms of learning and teaching, as well as the prescribed notions of therapist-as-expert. It seemed to me then, and still does today, that when someone is offered, let's say, a hunk of clay with the words, "Here, see what you might make or find in this" or offered a drum with the words, "Try it if you like, and see what rhythms you may discover." Or a person is offered a space to rewrite or reenact a difficult situation, with the understanding that the teacher or therapist, will hang around, to witness the discoveries, to assist if asked, but not to judge as right or wrong the outcomes of such experiments. These propositions suggest that one is free to learn in whatever ways best suit and, moreover, part of the learning is in finding and exploring those ways. It is important to take creative risks; there is not one right way to use red paint or play a drum or dance or speak a dialogue. It depends, on what one is looking for, what one wants to express. Furthermore, by collaborating with others, ways of expressing thoughts and feelings may be discovered or rediscovered. These ideas and actions are, in my view, subversive in a world that demands certainty and adherence to correct behaviour, to the notion that indeed, there is one right way. These are, so often, the dilemmas that clients seek to ameliorate in therapy.

In contrast to rigid world views and, as this study endeavoured to show, the MCAT program's arts based learning paradigms offered its participants the freedom to imagine, to invent and to discover. I think the having of these experiences were, at least in part, what students meant about their experience as *life changing*. Its approach to learning was like its approach to therapy; as I have said at different points throughout this study, the learning and the practice for which it was set out, have

the potential to inform and reflect each other. With that in mind, those same freedoms may be offered to clients; therapy is removed from the singular realm of pathology, and defined instead as learning, a search or an investigation into new and different life possibilities. The arts therapist and her client work as collaborators in the learning-research process.

7.6 Closing Thoughts

What seems particularly important at the conclusion of this study is recognising the high value that can be placed on learning as a source of wellbeing and wellness. The study has confirmed for me, both in examining the experiences of others and in reflecting on my own learning process, that arts based learning like art itself, is transformative. In its many forms, it has the potential to challenge existing beliefs, stimulate individual and collective imaginations, engender innovation, and create spaces for difference and differentness.

Late in my research process, I discovered the work of Willis and Schubert, and was both affirmed and inspired by their ideas on the arts and education. I was also drawn to the two pertinent questions they ask, questions that seem to resonate with this study. I therefore close the thesis with their words.

Education at its best is the same as how to lead a life. Wise living, we believe, requires constantly extending ourselves through many acts of faith, courage and imagination. Hence, there are no simple answers into how or what to live, only opportunities continually to inquire reflectively into ourselves and the world around us as we continue to make decisions about how to act on what we believe. Furthermore, we have also come to believe that this kind of inquiry which is the heart of living and education is the same kind of imaginative inquiry which is the heart of creative art.

The very notions of art, and education, and inquiry embody risk. In fact, intrigue (in the sense of interest or fascination) challenge, risk and change may be the essence of both art and education, what they most have in common, what one needs to feel in order to understand them. Inquiry may be making explicit or bringing to consciousness of this essence; asking, *What about art is educative? What about education is artful?*²³⁸



²³⁸ George Willis and William H. Schubert, eds., *Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry: Understanding Curriculum and Teaching through the Arts*. (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1991), 5.

Design and Social Context Portfolio

HRESC

HF:HP
Building 220.2.36
Bundoora West Campus
HRESC-B: 716-08/05

Wednesday, 21 December 2005
Ms Geraldine Katz
3114977
P.O. Box 178
East Melbourne 8002



Dear Gerry

Re: Human Research Ethics Application Approval

The Design and Social Context Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee considered your amended ethics application entitled: *"Stories and Theories : Representations of teaching and learning through the experience of the arts."*

I am pleased to advise that your application has now approved your application as level 2 Risk classification by the chair as of 30 November 2005. This approval will now be reported to the University Human Research Ethics Committee for noting.

This now completes the Ethics procedure. Your ethics approval expires on 29th November 2008

You are reminded that you are required to complete an Annual/Final report, which should be forwarded to the Secretary of the DSC HRESC – B at the above address not more than 12 months from date of this letter. This report is available from: URL: http://www.rmit.edu.au/rd/hrec_apply

Should you have any queries regarding your ethics application please seek advice from the Chair of the sub-committee Assoc. Prof. Heather Fehring on 9925 7840, heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au or contact me on (03) 9925 7877 or email heather.porter@rmit.edu.au

I wish you well in your research.

Yours sincerely

Heather Porter
Secretary
Design and Social Context
Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee
Operational Unit – Bundoora

CC Assoc. Prof David Forrest, Senior Supervisor, School of Education

Appendix 2

RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Groups or Disclosure of Personal Information

PORTFOLIO OF	Design and Social Context
SCHOOL/CENTRE OF	Education
Name of participant:	
Project Title:	<i>Stories and Theories: Representations of learning and teaching though the experience of art</i>
Name(s) of investigators: (1)	Geraldine (Gerry) Katz Phone: (03) 9818-1821
	or mobile number Phone: 0438 157 328

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.
3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.
4. I give my permission to be audiotaped ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. I give my permission for my name or identity to be used. ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) Having read the Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
 - (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
 - (d) The privacy of the information I provide will be safeguarded. However should information of a private nature need to be disclosed for moral, clinical or legal reasons, I will be given an opportunity to negotiate the terms of this disclosure.
 - (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to _____ (researcher to specify). Any information which may be used to identify me will not be used unless I have given my permission (see point 5).

Participant's Consent

Name:	_____	Date:	_____
	(Participant)		
Name:	_____	Date:	_____
	(Witness to signature)		

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from : www.rmit.edu.au/council/hrec
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Appendix 3

Letter of Invitation to Interview, Plain Language Statement and Interview Questions

Date: 25th January 2008

Design and Social Context Portfolio

School of Education

RMIT University

Melbourne, VIC 3000

Dear Participant

My name is Geraldine Katz. I am a postgraduate student undertaking a PhD (Project) at RMIT University. The title of my research is:

Stories and Theories: Representations of learning and teaching through the experience of art.

The purpose of this PhD study is multifaceted. Its primary aim is to give voice to the experiences of graduates and teachers who have participated in an innovative (Australian) tertiary education program – the RMIT-Master Creative Arts Therapy (RMIT-MCAT) program and to illuminate the approaches to learning within this program. It is anticipated that the stories gleaned from program participants will portray the ways in which arts based, experiential, collaborative learning is directly applicable to creative arts therapy practice. And, it is hoped that a compilation of these stories will enhance and expand knowledge about the fields of creative arts therapy education and practice. Indirectly, it is thought that the study will also provide an overview of the program's 11-year history.

Approximately 30-40 participants will be involved. I am approaching you as one who has had experience in the RMIT-MCAT program. I would like to have a conversation (audio taped) with you about your recollections and your thoughts about being a student and/or a teacher in the program. I envision the time involved as about 60-90 minutes. Should you agree to participate, I will provide you with a set of 5-6 questions which address the areas of interest to the study.

I do not foresee any risks to you; you will not be asked to reveal any personal information, and anything you do say will be kept in complete confidence and anonymised when used in the

study. Your participation is voluntary and may be terminated at any point as you may wish. You may withdraw at any time, and any unprocessed data may also be withdrawn. Should you have any concerns, you may contact me on the phone numbers listed below, or my Supervisor, at RMIT University, A/Prof. David Forrest on (03) 9925-4920 Please confirm your willingness to participate, by contacting me by phone or e-mail and I will return your message to arrange a time and place to meet.

Very truly yours,

Gerry (Geraldine) Katz

e-mail: gerrykatz@gmail.com

Phone: (03) 9818-1821 or Mobile: 0438 157 328

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your time in the RMIT Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) program; what was it like to be a student in this program?
2. What were the significant learning events that stand out in your memory of your experience as a former student or teacher in the RMIT-CAT program?
3. What was it like to participate in arts based learning events”
4. What was your most challenging arts based learning experience?
5. What was your most rewarding arts based learning experience?
6. What did you think about the use of stories and storytelling as these were part of the learning experiences?
7. If you imagined representing your student experiences through one or a multiple art form, what would that look and/or sound like?
8. Are there stories about your experiences in the Program which are outside the focus of these questions? If so, would you care to relate those?
9. What links would you make of these learning experiences to arts therapy practice?

Appendix 5

RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Postgraduate Program in Creative Arts Therapy
School of Education

MELBOURNE
AUSTRALIA

Introduction

The aim of the program is to provide the post-graduate student with essential knowledge and skills in the Creative Arts Therapies. Emphasis is on developing the student's critical understanding of the Arts in society, and of the Creative Arts as therapeutic, for diverse client groups, in situations of wellness, illness, and special health and learning needs. The student is assisted to learn the analytical and creative skills necessary for a dynamic, responsible professional practice as a Creative Arts Therapist.

Educational Philosophy

The broad educational aim is framed in and informed by the philosophy and principles of collaborative learning, reflective practice and 'professional artistry'²³⁹ The program facilitates student learning of essential knowledges and skills so as to function competently in practice situations.

How the Program is offered

The Master's degree is offered as a three year, part-time program. Students may exit at various levels (refer to Program Structure section for more details). Classes are conducted as weekend workshops on the City campus. Teaching staff with experience and knowledge in the area will deliver each course of study. The Program is currently administered through the School of Education in the Portfolio of Design and Social Context.

Program Coordinator: *Ms Gerry Katz* e-mail: geraldine.katz@rmit.edu.au
Phone (03) 9925-4650

Entrance Requirements

To be considered for admission the applicant should normally hold a Bachelor's degree or the equivalent in the following discipline or related areas.

- Fine Arts or Creative Arts
- Health Sciences
- Education
- Social Sciences

Applicants will be interviewed to indicate their interest in the area of creative arts therapy. Ideally they will be employed, or be a volunteer, in a relevant field of practice.

²³⁹ Schon, Donald A. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Special Entry

Special entry may be offered to applicants who can demonstrate a work history in the field even though they may not have a first degree. This is in accordance with RMIT University's mission to recognise prior learning

Course Credits

Credit *may* be granted for courses (subjects) passed in other tertiary level courses.

Note: Application for a credit does not guarantee the granting of a credit.

Research Requirements

Applicants who have not successfully completed undergraduate studies in research as approved by the Program Coordinator, may be required to undertake a bridging subject in research methods.

🔗 Application Procedures and Closing Date

Applicants must apply on a 'Direct Application Form'. This form is on the RMIT Website or available from **Office for Prospective Students**, Building 15, City Campus, Melbourne.

Telephone: (03) 9925-2260 or **email:** ops@rmit.edu.au

Applications must be submitted by the following date:

30 November - Closing date. (for Semester I of the following year)

NB: *Late applications may be considered if places are available.*

Application Process

Applicants are required to respond in writing to a series of questions, to write a 1-page essay, and to present, with these, for an interview. All of these aspects are considered in determining eligibility for the Program.

Notification of Offer

First-round offer letters are usually forwarded in December/January, for Semester I. Applicants are required to reply by the date specified in the offer letter. Second-round offers will only be made if places are available.

Enrolment: Details of the date, time and venue for enrolment will be forwarded to successful applicants in January. Enrolments normally take place at the end of January.

Fees: The program is a full fee paying program; details are available on request.

Graduate Diploma in Creative Arts Therapy
Two years part-time (96 Credit Points)



Master of Creative Arts Therapy
Three years part-time. (144 Credit Points)

Program Structure - Courses of Study

Year One (48 credit points)

Art as Experience
Creative Arts Therapy Modalities 1
The Therapeutic Relationship

Advanced Arts Therapy

Year Two (48 credit points)

Creative Arts Therapy Modalities 2
Diversity in Practice
Qualitative & Art-based Research

Year 3 - Masters Coursework (48 credit points)

The Practicum Research Project comprises the Supervised Practicum Fieldwork Placement and Integrative Studio Workshop

The Minor Research Project/Thesis comprises development and completion of a Research Proposal and Research Project.

Outline of Courses

PERF2037 Art as Experience

The course focuses on the role of the arts in society and the use of the arts, creativity, and play, in therapy. The student learning develops philosophical and conceptual frameworks with which to explore concepts of the arts as therapeutic.

PERF2035 Creative Arts Therapy Modalities 1 (*Therapeutic Use of Visual Art & Music*)

This course is designed to provide students with opportunities to enhance, and gain, knowledge of Art (visual), Music, and Movement as therapeutic, (and to develop skills in the application of such knowledge). The emphasis is on understanding the therapeutic value of creative processes, located within these frameworks.

OHTH2096 Therapeutic Relationships & Group Dynamics (Arts based Interactions)

A combination of didactic and experiential learning focuses on concepts, philosophies, principles and practices underpinning therapeutic relationships within the framework of creative arts therapy. Concepts about 'self' and 'self-as-therapist', on the interpersonal client/therapist relationship, as well as on the nature of groups, group process and group dynamics are explored. The relationship of both client and therapist to therapeutic art forms and the nature of non-discursive communication are explored.

PUBH1318 Diversity in Arts Therapy Practice

This course aims to provide an understanding of the processes and strategies for understanding client needs, abilities, and receptivity to arts therapies, along with cultural and social aspects. It offers a foundational knowledge on which to work in an arts therapeutic relationship with people with special needs, and to assess which methods or techniques are most appropriate for particular client groups.

PERF2036 Creative Arts Therapy Modalities 2 (*Therapeutic Use of Drama & Storytelling*)

This course is designed to provide students with opportunities to enhance, and gain, knowledge of drama, dramatherapy and storytelling as therapeutic, (and to develop skills in the application of such knowledge). The emphasis is on understanding the therapeutic value of creative processes, located within these frameworks as well as the inherent philosophical perspectives.

COMM2068 Qualitative & Art-based Research

The course presupposes a general understanding of research principles. It is concerned with the power of research to generate knowledge/theory, which informs practice. The course offers students the opportunity to explore a range of approaches and research methodologies, including art-based research, which address the constitution of reality from a qualitative perspective. The concept of subjectivity is central.

PERF2038 Advanced Arts Therapy

This course focuses on an in-depth exploration of the role and definition of the creative arts therapist. Students are given the opportunity to enact, and to examine the use of the arts modalities in the clinical setting. The place of the creative arts therapist in the community and within an institutional framework is also examined.

Elective Options are available:

For students not planning to proceed to the Master level of study and therefore not wishing to undertake a research course, an elective course may be substituted. Choices include: UG694 Integrated Arts; UG695 Issues in Arts Education; UG696 Theoretical Foundations in the Arts

OTED2094 The Practicum Field Placement Research Project

This course/unit provides students with supervised Field Placement opportunities in which to apply knowledge and techniques gained in the classroom to client-centred practise.

Skill development and Supervision are integral to the practicum. Whilst in the field, students explore approaches to client-centred, arts-therapy practice, as well as the use of materials and techniques. Facilitated supervision groups review personal and professional issues arising from the placement experiences.

Integrative Studio Workshop The aim of this unit is to provide students with an opportunity to experiment with creative arts therapy processes and aspects of self-as-therapist. Students' learning includes exploring multi-modal approaches, integrating various combinations of creative arts forms to be used in practice setting. It is offered on fortnightly Saturdays.

OTED2095 The Minor Research Project/Thesis is undertaken with academic supervision. The Project is a work of 14,000 words or equivalent, a choice of structure; it could take the form of an arts based research project or it could be constructed as a standard academic thesis, or it could be made as some combination of the two. Thus there is a choice of three minor project formats from which to choose, any of which may include an exhibition, installation, performance or other creative synthesis.

Minor Project Seminar The aim of this seminar is to assist students in the design and development of minor research proposals and projects. The format is interactive discussion of each student's ideas about approaching the Minor Research Project. Seminars will be offered on fortnightly Saturday mornings alternating with the Integrative Studio Workshops.



NOTE: *Graduate education in any arts therapy field, or field of human services, challenges the student personally as well as academically. A student's personal issues often become stirred and subsequently find their way into the context of coursework, fieldwork, supervision or advisement. The MCAT Program strongly encourages all students to engage in individual therapy prior to and/or during their training. It is essential for the student to identify potential areas of personal conflict that need further resolution. The student is encouraged to take these concerns to personal counselling so as not to blur the edges of the therapeutic and academic spheres. What occurs in the learning spaces is not psychotherapy.*

The Student Counseling Centre offers an option for assisting students with personal concerns while they are enrolled in the Program. Otherwise, students with particular academic difficulties are referred to the RMIT Learning Skills Unit

Appendix 6

RMIT University

MASTER of CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY Program

A Philosophy of Learning and Teaching

The educational focus of the MCAT Program is anchored in the broad concept of the ‘arts for individual and community wellbeing.’ The Program traverses the discipline areas of education, health, and the arts, and in so doing creates opportunities for multifaceted understandings. Therapy is understood in its broadest definition as supportive of change and growth. Within the Program ‘therapy’ refers specifically to the ‘therapeutic use of the creative arts.’ The varied integrations of the therapeutic uses of creative arts include, among other things, applications to education and to health and, in this sense, the Program has broad community appeal. Approaches to learning emphasise the capacity and potential of the arts to create, enhance and support opportunities for personal change.

Course content and classroom/workshop learning experiences are aimed at assisting the student to understand how engagement with the arts can contribute to a heightened self-awareness and awareness of other. An underpinning premise is of the importance of seeing all persons (self and other) in context, with an appreciation for the client’s circumstances. The primary learning goal is for the students to discover, both the general and the specifics of the therapeutic (educative and health) uses of art forms. These ideas demand consideration of the effect, both of creating art, and being an audience to it. The MCAT student is directed and guided to reflect on these ideas, as well as to read, to conceptualize, to experience the arts directly, and ultimately to incorporate them into professional practice.

In concert with relevant theoretical perspectives, the Program asks students to approach learning through a consideration of the questions that their studies of creative arts therapy raise for them. Among the significant questions that students are led to contemplate, throughout all areas of study, is an overarching one that asks, *“How do the arts enhance and foster wellness, thus (potentially) expanding one’s capacity to think, act and imagine?”*

Appendix 7

RMIT - MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

Course Evaluation Form & Learning Log

Course _____

Instructor _____

Semester _____

This form is designed to help your teachers gain a better understanding of how they are assisting your learning and how they might improve their teaching. Please answer each item as candidly as possible. Your anonymity is assured. The form is also set out so that you, as the student, may use it to reflect on your learning experiences within the course.

Please complete the following statements.

1. What most helped my learning in the course was...
2. What most hindered my learning in this course was...
3. What most helped me to take responsibility for my own learning in this class was...
4. What most prevented me from taking responsibility for my own learning in this class was...
5. This class revealed to me that the area for my development as a learner that I need to work on most is...

Please respond by circling one of the responses and adding some personal comment:

6. In this course I found that different teaching approaches were used (*circle one*) often/sometimes/rarely. What are your reactions to the teaching approaches used?
7. In this course I found that the instructor was responsive to students' concerns (*circle one*) consistently/occasionally/rarely. What are your feelings about this level of responsiveness?
8. In this course I found that the teacher tried to get students to participate (*circle one*) frequently/occasionally/rarely. What are your feelings about the amount of participation by students in this course?
9. In this course I found that I received information about my learning (*circle one*) regularly/occasionally/rarely. What is your opinion about the frequency with which you received information about your learning and the quality of that information?
11. In this course I found that I was exposed to a variety of perspectives, opinions, voices, and views (*circle one*) regularly/occasionally/rarely. What are your feelings about the level of your exposure to diverse perspectives in this class?
12. In this course, to what extent was the instructor... (*please circle one response for each question*)

Knowledgeable about the subject?	very / somewhat / not at all
Able to communicate that knowledge well?	very / somewhat / not at all
Clear about why the course was organised as it was?	very / somewhat / not at all
Courteous and respectful to students?	very / somewhat / not at all

Please complete the following statements.

13. Overall, the moments in the course when I was most engaged, excited, and involved as a learner were when...

14. Overall, the moments in the course when I was most distanced, disengaged, and uninvolved as a learner were when...

Please respond to each question.

15. What would you most like to say about your experiences as a student in this course?

16. What piece of advice would you most like to give the instructor on how to teach the course in the future?

17. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the experience of being a student in class that you haven't already said in response to previous items? If so, please note it on the attached blank page.

Learning Log

At the end of our classes this weekend, please take the time to write a few sentences in response to the following three questions on the attached blank page:

1. What do you know as a result of participating in this learning experience that you didn't know prior to class?

2. What can you do as a result of participating in the learning situations that you couldn't do prior to class?

3. What could you teach someone to understand or do as a result of participating in these learning situations that you couldn't teach them last week?

RMIT - MASTER of CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

Developmental Learning Map - Learning Creative Arts Therapy –

The Courses, Concepts, and some of the Learning Questions

The Arts Therapeutic Relationship (The Therapeutic Relationship and Group Dynamics)

Over-arching questions: *What comprises a 'therapeutic relationship'?*
How do I see myself in the role of arts therapist?
What is 'Group Process'?
How may the therapeutic arts experience be offered?

Concepts For Consideration: self-in-relationship; self-as-therapist; self-as-artist;
Reflection/reflective/conceptual understanding/ imagination
philosophical approaches/theoretical knowledge/
Discursive & non-discursive expression/communication

A Note: *"The most important goal to be achieved is that the student should clarify and understand her/his own basic relationship to people, and the attitudinal and philosophical concomitants of that relationship."* (Rogers (1951) p.432)

Art as Experience

Over-arching questions: *How is art a way of knowing?*

Concepts For Consideration: art as knowledge, and how art is experienced at different times in peoples lives; the influences of art on social and political constructs, so as to further apprehend its possibilities within a therapeutic context.

How do the arts contribute to wellbeing?

Concepts For Consideration: Looking at the arts in Australian culture/the arts contributing to development, learning, rehabilitation, wellbeing among individuals, groups & communities;
The arts as essential/necessary to growth and development; potentially therapeutic

Creative Arts Therapy / Arts Therapy Modality 1 (Visual Art & Music)

Over-arching questions: *What are the qualities of engaging with visual art and music that provide a therapeutic experience?*
How do the roles of artist and arts therapist intersect using these modalities?

Concepts For Consideration: Approaching art / Experiencing the arts/play/creativity – sensory qualities;
Understanding the art forms and materials – ways of seeing self and other; ways of looking at space/relationship; Image/sound/movement/word/colour/form/enactment/story

Creative Arts Therapy / Arts Therapy Modality 2 (Dramatherapy & Storytelling)

Over-arching questions: *What are the qualities of engaging in drama and storytelling that provide a therapeutic experience?* *How do the roles of artist and arts therapist intersect using these modalities?*

Concepts For Consideration: Approaching art / Experiencing the arts/play/creativity – sensory qualities;
Understanding the art forms and materials – ways of seeing self and other; ways of looking at space/relationship; Image/sound/movement/word/colour/form/enactment/story

Diverse Client Groups (Diversity in Arts Therapy – Cultural Issues)

Over-arching questions: *What is the importance of cultural identity and difference in arts therapy practice?*

Concepts For Consideration: Approaching the client/client group through and with art. Constructions of cultural identity and difference, as well as the cultural, gendered and political contexts in which people suffer illness or distress, or care for others.

Qualitative Research (Research for the Arts Therapies)

Over-arching questions: *What is qualitative research?*

How may the qualitative approaches be used to explore creative arts therapy ?

Concepts For Consideration: research; a research project; data; findings; qualities; themes;

Advanced Arts Therapy

Over-arching question: *What is the role of the arts therapist? How does it look & sound?*

Concepts For Consideration: Practice issues; ethics and role identity

The Research Project:

Part A: Practicum Placement Practice experience through supervised field placement.

Advanced Studio - Studio experimentation for practice issues and with arts modalities

Part B: The Minor Research Project: Investigating and/or examining creative process – exploring an issue/question through the arts or within the arts. Examining Creative Arts Therapy practice.

Appendix 9

RMIT - MASTER of CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

Overview of Year 1 Learning Experiences - 2006

The overarching focus of study in Year 1 is a consideration of the potentially transformative power of engaging with the arts and with creative processes, and how these pertain to an understanding of self-as-therapist and self-as-artist. The philosophies and approaches to therapy and therapeutic arts are framed by research²⁴⁰ questions such as:

- What is art? What is the place of the arts in societies? In a therapeutic relationship?
- What is creativity and how is the creative self expressed?
- How might visual art and music be used therapeutically?
- How do I experience other and myself in relationship, and how are relationships co-created?
- What is meant by the 'therapeutic relationship'?
- What is the concept of 'process' in therapy with individuals and groups?

These questions will be explored in the learning workshops in which we:

- Examine knowledge related to therapy/arts therapies with individuals and groups, as well as consider ideas related to the importance of client stories;
- Experience the effects of creative process through working directly with art and art forms;
- Explore materials and spaces;
- Examine the role of the therapist, broadly conceived;
- Begin to conceptualise practice in the arts therapies.

Other significant themes explored in theory and practice throughout the Year (and the Program) are *collaborative learning*, *experience as knowledge* and *reflective practice*, which begins with *reflective learning*.

The courses for **Year 1** of the program are:

Semester 1: PERF2037 – Art as Experience

PERF2035 - Creative Arts Therapy Modality 1 (therapeutic uses of Visual Art and of Music)

Semester 2: OHTH2033 – The Arts Therapeutic Relationship

* *Working directly with arts forms of your choosing, you will be invited to undertake a creative work, expressive of the learning experiences you encounter throughout each semester. This work will be presented to peers and course facilitators at the end of Semester 2.*

Selected Readings will be provided from time to time. However, it is expected that students will purchase texts (both required and recommended) toward building a professional library.

✧ **SUPPLIES for CLASS** - Please maintain the following art supplies and bring to all classes:

1 box each of: Oil Pastels; Chalk Pastels; Drawing Pencils; Charcoals; 1 medium-size sketch pad; 1 Glue Stick; 1 Roll of Masking Tape; package of wet 'handwipes'.

The Program will supply all other materials – paper, paint, brushes, etc.

² **Please wear comfortable clothes that are OK to attract paint and dirt** ✧

✧ **Please bring a floor cushion if you like to sit on the floor** ✧

²⁴⁰ Research in its broadest definition - the notion of inquiry and the primacy of questions as pathways to understanding, guides all of the learning paradigms within the MCAT Program.

Appendix 10

MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

Overview of Year 2 Learning Experiences - 2006

The learning throughout this Stage B of the Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) program is intended to deepen and enhance your appreciation of the arts as therapy as well as in society, and to extend your understanding of diversity in practice and research. It is expected that you will achieve these goals through the following learning activities:

- Continue your exploration of the arts as knowledge - ways of knowing;
- Reflect on the potentially transformative and therapeutic effects of creative processes, and the role the arts may play in the lives of individuals, families and communities;
- Explore the potential contribution of the arts and arts therapy to diverse social and cultural situations;
- Continue exploring the significance of art and creativity in the life of the therapist.
{You are, therefore, encouraged to be involved in regular, ongoing studio work}

Learning opportunities, again, take the form of experiential studio workshops coupled with didactic and interactive discussions, which are both facilitator-guided and student centred.

The Courses for Year 2 of the program:

Semester 1

PERF2036 Creative Arts Therapy Modality 2 (focus on Dramatherapy and Storytelling²⁴¹)

COMM2068 Creative Research Methods (CAT Program focus on Arts- based & Qualitative Research)

Semester 2

PUBH1318 Diverse Client Groups/Diversity in Arts Therapy Practice

PERF2038 Advanced Arts Therapy

Through your participation in the Courses offered you will have opportunities to:

- Consider the cultural and developmental narratives of peoples' lives;
- Conceptualise practice in the arts therapies; explore and investigate approaches to it;
- Locate the variety of roles for the creative arts therapist in the community;
- Examine research paradigms;
- Engage in experiential, collaborative, and reflective learning as precursors to professional practice;
- Continue development of your personal creativity ** ('therapist as artist');
- Research creative process with its integral components of curiosity, humour, imagination, play and sensory awareness.

The model of Collaborative learning will continue this year, and will be implemented more comprehensively along with some aspects of Peer Assessment.

Courses within Semester 2 may be run concurrently, and Group Assessments may encompass both courses.

New Regulations regarding assessments apply as follows:

- 1. In order to achieve a Pass grade in any Course, ALL assignment tasks must obtain at least a Pass grade.**

²⁴¹ Storytelling will be undertaken in both Semester 1 & 2

2. **Failed assignments will not automatically attract a resubmission option. Students may appeal a Fail grade as per the RMIT guidelines.**
3. **See Attachment regarding the Award of Graduate Diploma with Distinction and grades for progression into the Masters level of study**

Readings and Resources: It is expected that students will purchase texts (both required and recommended) as a way to begin or continue building a professional library.

Course facilitators may provide Selected Readings, from time to time.

- You will be apprised if and when Course Reading Collections are to be placed on Closed Reserve in the RMIT Carlton Library. Please note that this library is no longer open on weekends.

★ ★ REMINDER - SUPPLIES for CLASS –

You are asked to bring the following art supplies to all classes,:

1 box each of Oil Pastels; Chalk Pastels; Drawing Pencils; Charcoals; 1 medium-size sketch pad; 1 Glue Stick; 1 Roll of Masking Tape; package of wet ‘hand wipes’.

All other materials – paper, paint, brushes, etc. will be supplied by the Program.

★ ★ Students are encouraged to begin to develop a ‘kit’ of supplies that will be useful to you. The contents may include materials for sound and rhythm, ‘dress-up’ materials, found objects, and whatever else stimulates your imagination and potential to play.

★ ★ Please wear comfortable, casual clothes that are OK to attract paint or smudges

Appendix 11

RMIT University

MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

Suggestions for Readings and Various Texts

To: Year 1 Students
From: Gerry Katz
Course Coordinator

The following is meant to provide you with a brief overview of expectations and suggestions regarding the use of readings and texts within the Creative Arts Therapy Grad.Dip./Masters program.

✿ **Readings for Therapeutic Process (NX001): Read as many of these chapters and articles as you wish, but please be sure to read the chapter by Coles, the one by Rogers, and the section entitled “Thinking, Feeling and Acting: Understanding Yourself and Others” prior to the first class on Saturday, 24th March.**

✎ Reading

One of the principles underpinning this program is that each student is responsible for appropriating knowledge, through experiential learning in class, and through reading and research outside of, and between classes. For some subjects, you will be provided with a collection of ‘Readings’; for other subjects, you will be expected to make extensive use of libraries as sources of relevant readings, or, in a few cases to purchase texts. All required, recommended and suggested readings in this Program are offered as a sample of ideas, philosophies and theories, and are, by no means, the ‘last word’ on any subject. As reading outside of class is a significant learning factor, and expectations around this activity are high, it may help you to know that the University recommends the following equation in self-directed learning: 1 hour class contact = 3 hours individual study.

I would advise you to approach any of the reading you do, interactively. Interactive reading is understood as the following: you read the piece, put it aside and write a brief synopsis of your understanding of the material, read it again to see if your understanding changes. Write some notes on your response to the piece, such as, are the author’s ideas new to you, how do these ideas challenge your assumptions. In a program such as this one, with gaps of several weeks between class meetings, much of your learning will derive from self-directed appropriation of knowledge. Developing the habit of close and critical reading will be of utmost value, as you progress through to your Graduate Diploma or Masters Project/Thesis. All of the assigned or suggested Readings, throughout the Program, are meant to stimulate your creative and critical thinking processes toward both the specific subject, and the broad topic of Creative Arts Therapy.

In addition, a file of abstracts of your readings will be an invaluable adjunct to your learning and professional practice. In your computer, or on 5x7 cards, maintain bibliographic notes on all the relevant readings that you find over the next three years.

As with any professional field, you will need to build a library of relevant books, articles and journals. Throughout the Program, various texts will be mentioned as potentially valuable adjuncts to your

professional library. The following texts are required reading and highly recommended for purchase. (Books are on order, and will be available from the RMIT Bookshop, City Campus).

- Spinelli, Ernesto. (1994) ***Demystifying Therapy***. London, Constable. ISBN 0-09-475-150-1
- Warren, Bernie. (Ed) (1993) ***Using the Creative Arts in Therapy; A Practical Introduction. Second Edition***. Routledge, London. ISBN 0-415-08814-3
- Yalom, Irvin D. (1998) ***The Yalom Reader***. New York, Basic Books. ISBN 0-465-03610-4
- Anderson, J. & Poole, M. (1999) ***Thesis and Assignment Writing: Third Edition***
Brisbane, John Wiley & Sons.

✠ Keeping a Journal

Begin to keep a Journal in which you reflect on aspects of your learning experience in this course.

Reflections might include your personal philosophy (ideas, values, beliefs) about the self, relationships, creativity, therapy and the arts in healing, the arts for health, your journey toward becoming an arts therapist, and any other categories of thought which spring to mind. Consider where your ideas and values originated, and how have they been formed and informed. What do you think, and how do you feel about the prospect of revealing more of your personal self in public? We suggest that after each class, you reflect, as well, on what is raised for you, intellectually, emotionally and physically by the learning experiences that have occurred.

Your journal is considered private and not for submission. We expect that your entries will become an important resource as you work toward your degree. You may choose to extrapolate from your journal as part of a presentation or assignment, and occasionally we may ask you to do so. For those of you who are unfamiliar with keeping a journal, the following texts may prove useful.

Boud, D., Keogh, R., Walker, D. *Reflection: Turning Experience Into Learning*
Holly, M.L. *Keeping a Personal-Professional Journal*

✠ **INTERNET** - We would like, eventually, to have a Web Page for our programme. Anyone who is adept and interested in creating a Web Page would be most welcome to work with us on developing one. You will find that there are some Web sites for 'Expressive Arts Therapy', for 'Creative Arts Therapy' and for the specialties of Art Therapy, Dance Therapy, Dramatherapy and Music Therapy.

✠ **PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS and BOOKS** – Various titles are available in the RMIT library as well as in other university libraries, which you can access on the Internet, and 'call' for, with your library Cavall card. Orientation to the Library will be provided on the first weekend of classes.

A list of relevant book titles and a rudimentary Film/Video List, follows. As you will see, the reading list contains fictional and drama and film selections, as well as theoretical texts, underscoring my view that imaginative literature has much to tell us about ourselves and about the human condition.

_____ **Fiction:**

Faces in the Water by Janet Frame; *The Death of Ivan Illich* by Leo Tolstoy
Tell Me A Riddle by Tillie Olsen; *The Way We Are* by May Sarton
The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins-Gilman
The Diary of Jane Summers by Doris Lessing; *The Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean

Rhys

A Darkness Visible by William Saroyan;
One True Thing by Anne Quindlan; *Mr Scobies's Riddle* by Elizabeth Jolley;
Scar Tissue by Michael Ignatieff; *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* by Janice

Galloway

Have the Men Had Enough and Mothers' Boys by Margaret Forster
Lying on the Couch and *When Nietzsche Wept* by Irvin Yalom

Plays Brecht, Chekhov, Ibsen, O'Neill, Shakespeare, Schaffer (to name a very few!)
Hedda Gabler, A Doll's House, Equus, Long Day's Journey Into Night,
King Lear, Anna Karenina, Waiting For Godot, The Doll Trilogy

Films & Videos (a sample) Beautiful Dreamer: Cosi: A Woman's Tale: An Angel at My
Table: Passionfish: Sweetie: Rainman: Waterdance: Good Will Hunting

Non-Fiction:

Berger, John. Ways of Seeing
Coles, Robert. The Call of Stories
Carkhuff, R.R. The Art of Helping
Foucault, M. Madness and Civilization
Gilligan, Carol. In A Different Voice
Goffman, Erving. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situations of Mental Patients
and Other Inmates and Relations in Public
Jung, Carl. The Undiscovered Self
May, Rollo. Psychology and the Human Dilemma and The Courage to Create
Rogers, Carl. Client-Centered Therapy
Rogers, Carl. On Becoming A Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy
Sontag, Susan. Illness as Metaphor and Aids as Metaphor
Showalter, Elaine. The Female Malady
Yalom, Irvin D. Existential Psychotherapy and Love's Executioner

Appendix 12

MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY (MCAT)

Collaborative Learning/Teaching Model

For: Year 1 & Year 2 MCAT Students

Re: A review of the approach as it is used in the MCAT Program

The following discussion sets out the conceptual and practical aspects of the Program's approach to learning and teaching within a Collaborative learning framework. This derives from the current literature, as well as from a variety of sources within the university community.

The approach begins with the premise that knowledge may be viewed as follows:

- Propositional (foundational) knowledge which is theoretical - found in textbooks;
 - Personal knowledge which is what one knows; what one brings from one's broad cultural experiences;
 - Process knowledge, which is what develops through one's interaction with others.
- Within this construct, knowledge is understood as, mainly, socially constructed (not simply waiting to be found), and therefore, the authority of knowledge does not reside in any one person.

These ideas underscore the Program's broad focus on experiential, collaborative, reflective, and self-directed paradigms of learning. The Program seeks to provide optimum space, time and opportunity for each student to acquire the desired as well as the necessary learning within all Courses. As such, this is an enhanced approach to student-centred learning.

Some particular features of this approach are:

- Courses within a semester may be offered concurrently rather than sequentially.
- Group presentation and assessments may incorporate both courses in a semester, and be done as a synthesis of learning.
- Student Learning Goals Statements may be used in some or all courses in 2006
- Elements of peer-assessment and self-assessment

Rationale: The rationale for using a collaborative learning approach (in conjunction with experiential workshops and self-directed reflective learning) is its potential to strengthen the Program's learning opportunities, as well as to enhance your career as a learner of Creative Arts Therapy.

As a learner, this model provides you with the following learning opportunities:

- To develop your self-confidence in putting forward your point of view, in dissenting from a prevailing consensus and in critically appraising theoretical constructs and the research of other professionals.
- To increase your awareness and understanding of group dynamics and process.
- To strengthen your ability to function as an equal member of a professional team, able to articulate your practice and its potential value to the community.

Overall, it is expected that these learning/teaching experiences will, ultimately, contribute to your professional development and practice, and to engender in each of you, a professional persona which models both thought and action for colleagues and co-workers, as well as for the clients and patients with whom you will work.

Several authors/teachers of note have guided and informed the thinking that has engendered the enhanced approach to learning and teaching. Among these are Bruffee (1999) Usher (1996) Ramsden (1992) Boud (1981) and Rogers (1969). A few relevant extracts from their writings are noted below.

Rogers (1969) defined the goal of education as the *facilitation of change and learning. This encapsulates notions of 'process' as against static knowledge and embraces the idea of 'freeing curiosity' among a community of learners.* (p. 104)

He also notes that, *Another way of learning for me is to state my own uncertainty, to try to clarify my puzzlement, and thus get closer to the meaning that my experience actually seems to have.* (p. 154)

Powell (1981) states that,

Critical thinking, judgement, creativeness, initiative, interpretive skills hypothesis-formulation and problem-solving capacities can only be made manifest by someone who is operating independently [and interdependently]... we value a society in which people are able to think and act independently, to exercise freedom of choice after rational reflection, and can conduct their own lives without having their minds made up by others.

Bruffee's (1999) works on collaborative learning, along with those of David Boud on experiential learning, have been a significant influence, and reflect some aspects of what has informed the process of conceptualizing these changes.

Bruffee (1999) makes the following points:

Learning (anything) is not an individual process, but a social interdependent one, and it occurs on an axis not drawn between individuals and things but among people. We learn best in groups because we tend to talk each other out of unshared biases and presuppositions.

Although we learn a lot from what we read, we learn a lot more from what we say to each other about what we read. As a group, we distribute knowledge and authority among ourselves.

Research has shown that conversation is of such vital importance to learning that with it, any of us has a shot at doing whatever we want to do. Without it, few of us stand a chance.

Collaborative learning is best done in a small transition group which provides an arena for conversation. Within this group, we learn to vest authority and trust in our peers – other members of the group.

The essence of collaboration in learning is a reacculturation which has the potential to engage us in constructive conversation with others whose backgrounds and needs are similar to our own but also different.

Collaborative learning is not easy because it places us in a position in which we must reconcile our preconceptions in conversation with another. And, it requires us to set aside our traditional notions of the teacher as classroom authority.

Collaborative Learning and Teaching Approach

The approach is meant to be a tool through which small group discussion and didactic material may be processed within a degree of structure.

Additionally, it must be noted that this process may be new to some students and teachers alike.

Sample Class Agenda :

Saturday	9:00AM-1:00 PM - Experiential Workshops – [facilitator-directed]
	1:00-2:00 PM - Lunch Break
	2:00-4:00 PM - Small Group Collaborative Learning task

Sunday 9:30-10:30 AM - Plenary Session: Report of Small Groups to the
 Large Group
 10:45-1:45 - Experiential Workshops – [facilitator-directed]
 2:00 – 4:00 PM - Lunch Break
 2:30-4:00 PM - Group or Self-directed study & Closure

The four main tasks for the Facilitator/teacher are:

Step 1

- designing learning tasks
- unpacking small group consensus in plenary discussion
- representing larger relevant knowledge communities
- overseeing small consensus groups; (designated small groups will work together consistently over a semester)

Step 2

Provide the student small groups with a question or a short piece of material to be analysed – relevant to the learning topic of the day or weekend;

if a question, one is usually enough, and it should be short and simple;

make the question concrete, clearly expressed and open-ended;

questions that have more than one answer will provide issues for debate;

in some tasks, as controversial questions;

in some tasks, ask students to analyse a short passage from the Course Readings.

Make clear to the students that disagreement is welcome, and that the small group's recorder is encouraged to mention in their reports dissenting views expressed during the group's discussion.

Step 3 Act as, or appoint, a timekeeper (not as a consultant) to the small groups.

Step 4

Facilitate the plenary session in which each small group reports back to the larger group. Such facilitation would include helping students to do any of the following: enumerate major themes; explore sources of dissent; act as a representative of the larger knowledge community of which you are a member.

Collaborative Learning Worksheet for Student Consensus Groups

Within a Consensus group, students work collaboratively on a limited but open-ended task, negotiating among themselves what they think and know in order to arrive at some kind of consensus or agreement.

* The Task or Question: generated by the facilitator, with input from the students as appropriate.

Step 1 Form into designated Small Groups for didactic learning task. Agree on one person to record the views expressed in the group, including both the decisions the group makes collaboratively and significant disagreement. As well, agree on one group member to be a timekeeper. The Recorder* will speak for the group in the Plenary session.

***Think of the Recorder as the ‘Artist (Therapist) Witness’**

Step 2 One member of the group (not the Recorder) will read the task aloud.

Step 3 Students will work collaboratively and interdependently, through verbal discussion, around the task for 1 hour. For each question (or task), decide on one answer that represents a consensus among the

members of the group. The Recorder will record the events of this discussion as a report to the Large group in the Plenary session.

Note: Disagreement is welcome; the Recorder is encouraged to mention dissenting views expressed during the group's discussion. 'Dissenting views' are those which are not, in the end, assimilated into the group's consensus. The group may find that, within the task, one faction may dissent from the consensus being forged by other members of the group, and the group 'agree to disagree' – that is its consensus. The process that led to this agreement is what the Recorder reports in the plenary session.

Step 4 At the 75 minute time signal, the Recorder reads aloud the draft of the report; at this point, the group has the opportunity to amend and make complete the final draft. The report should contain the process of the discussion as well as the findings.

Step 5 The Small groups reconvene with each other at a Plenary session (the designated time for reconvening as a large group). Each Recorder will read the report of their task -directed discussion. (Major points may be posted on large paper). The Facilitator/teacher will moderate this process, helping the class to draw together the major points from the reports. When possible, the large group may construct a consensus that most members of the class can 'live with.'

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Appendix 13

(Sample Assessment) PERF 2037 & PERF 2035 ASSESSMENT

The assessment for the course will take the form of a submitted portfolio, and will contain the following materials. Due dates to be negotiated with the course facilitators.

1. **Report** (3000 words max.) examining your findings from the Field Work research.
(40%)
2. **Short Story/Essay** (1000 words max) about your learning experiences in this course. (25%)
3. **Small-group, oral presentation: a creative** exploration of the social and political aspects of the arts, as found in the experiential and theoretical learning plus **Individual** written outline of the process of designing the project and developing the presentation (500-700) words)
Note: this is in conjunction with PERF2035 (30%)
4. **Self-assessment** using the learning log (5%)

PERF2037ART AS EXPERIENCE Assignments for the Assessment of your learning.

Part 1. **Research Report of 2500-3000 words max. (40% of total grade)**

Due Date: Friday, 12th May 2005 (No Extensions w/out medical certificate)

Construct a Report which gives the details of Field Work research, your findings and experiences, using the following questions as a framework:

**What did you set out to look for? What forms of representation particularly interested you?
What were your assumptions and beliefs as you began?**

How would you describe your personal experiences of engaging with ‘made art’ / the art world? The significant elements and those of less importance.

What did you notice about the reactions of people around you – the public - to the art experience?

How have your findings confirmed and tested your assumptions and beliefs about the arts?

How does this research suggest to you the therapeutic potential of the arts?

The Report may illustrated or contain any art forms as you might wish to include.

*** NB** The standard format of a Report differs from that of an essay. If you are not sure about the format, please consult a reference guide to report writing

Part 2. **Short Story/Essay of 1000 words, max . (25% of total grade)**

Write a short story about yourself (in 3rd person form) describing and reflecting on your learning experiences in this Course.

These would include your participation in the experiential workshops, the self-directed reading, preparation for the field work, collaborative learning experiences.

Due Date: Friday, 12th May 2006 (No Extensions w/out medical certificate)

Assessment Criteria - REPORT

1. The Report addresses the requirements of the Assignment in the following ways:
(60%)
2. Communication Skills
 - a) The Report presented in an appropriate academic format, paying particular attention to consistent and correct referencing, spelling and grammatical construction. (15%)
 - b) Ideas are presented in a concise, manner, taking the reader through a logical discussion from Introduction to Summary, conclusion and closing. (25%)

Group Presentation Assessment

Conjointly for PERF2037 Art as Experience and PERF2035 Creative Arts Therapy Modality 1

Part 3. Small-group Peer Presentations & Individual Process Narrative (30%)

☆☆ **A representation of what we have come to know – the story so far...**

Due Date: Presentation – Sunday, 4th June; Process narrative - Monday, 19th June

Part A. - Each Small Group will enact its developmental process through the creative mediums of enactment, sound and visual constructs. The Presentation will embody precepts derived from in-class workshops and discussions, fieldwork, and readings.

Thus, re-enactment of earlier experiential learning may be expected to form and/or inform the presentation. 20 minutes (max.) for the presentation and 15 minutes for discussion and feedback.

Criteria for assessing this work:

- Clarity - the presentation demonstrates understanding of group dynamics and group process;
- Focus – the presentation maintains topical focus;
- Readability – the presentation is understandable and relevant to observers.

Part B. Individual Process Narrative: (1000 words, max.) *a written report in which you describe your involvement in, and observations of, the creative and collaborative processes through which the presentation has been brought to fruition by your small group. (Opportunity for Peer feedback.)*

Criteria for assessing this work:

- Clarity - the author demonstrates understanding of group dynamics and group process;
- Focus – the report maintains topical focus;
- Readability – the report uses good grammar punctuation, and reads logically.

Assessment Criteria – Narrative Communication Skills, for both presentation and written component.

Part 3. Self Assessment per Learning Log - 5% of Overall Grade☆☆

Due Date: Monday, 19th June 2005

Appendix 14

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